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J. Chotzner



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HEBREW SATIRE



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HEBREW SATIRE

BY

J. CHOTZNER, PH.D.

LATE HEBREW MASTER AT HARROW

AUTHOR OF

"HEBREW HUMOUR," ETC.



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

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PREFACE

VERY little attention has hitherto been paid by authors generally to those works forming part of Hebrew literature, in which much of delightful satire is predominant. The object of this volume, therefore, is to make the reader familiar with the contents of several of these writings which may prove interesting to him.

A few portions of this volume have already appeared in London periodicals, including "The Jewish Review," and some others thereof have served as the themes of lectures delivered to various literary societies.

J. C.

LONDON, *February* 1911.



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HEBREW SATIRE.

HEBREW SATIRISTS.

SINCE the birth of Hebrew literature, many centuries ago, satire has been one of its many characteristics. It is directed against the foibles and follies of the miser, the hypocrite, the profligate, the snob. The dull sermoniser, who puts his congregation to sleep, fares badly, and even the pretty wickednesses of the fair sex do not escape the hawk-eye of the Hebrew satirist. The luxury and extravagance of the "Daughters of Zion" were attacked by no less a person than Isaiah himself; but human nature, especially that of a feminine kind, was too strong even for so eminent a prophet as he was, and there is no reason to suppose that the lady of those days wore one trinket the less in deference to his invective.

There are, in fact, several incidents mentioned here and there in the pages of the Bible, which are decidedly of a satirical nature. Most prominent among them are the two that refer respec-

tively to Bileam, who was sermonised by his ass, and to Haman who, as the Prime Minister of Persia, had to do homage publicly to Mordecai, the very man whom he greatly hated and despised. Nay, we are told, that, by the irony of fate, Haman himself ended his life on the exceptionally huge gallows which, while in a humorous turn of mind, he had ordered to be erected for the purpose of having executed thereon the object of his intense hatred.

And again, there are two excellent satires to be found respectively in the 14th chapter of Isaiah, and in the 18th chapter of the 1st Book of Kings. In the first, one of the mighty Babylonian potentates is held up to derision, on account of the ignominious defeat he had sustained in his own dominions, after he had been for a long time a great terror to contemporary nations, living in various parts of the ancient world. Even the trees of the forests are represented there as having mocked at his fall, saying : " Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us." In the second satire, the false prophets of Baal are ridiculed by Elijah for having maimed their bodies, in order to do thereby honour to a deity which is sometimes sarcastically referred to in the Bible as being " the god of flies."

Delightfully satirical are also the two fables quoted in the Bible in connection with *Jotham* and *Nathan*, the Prophet. These are commonly well-known, and no extracts from them need be given here.

The satirical turn of mind manifested by Hebrew writers living in Biblical times, has been transmitted by them as a legacy to their descendants, who flourished in subsequent ages down to the present day. The first among them was Ben Sira who, in 180 B.C., wrote a book, some of the contents of which are satirical, for there the vanity of contemporary women, and the arrogance of some of the rich in the community are ridiculed with mild sarcasm.

But much more keen was the sense of the satirical that was possessed by some of the ancient Rabbis, who were among those that brought into existence the vast and interesting Talmudical literature. One of their satires, called "Tithes," runs as follows:—

In Palestine there once lived a widow with her two daughters, whose only worldly possessions consisted of a little field. When she began to plough it, a Jewish official quoted to her the words of the lawgiver Moses: "Thou shalt not plough with ox and ass together." When she began to sow, she was admonished in the words

of the same lawgiver not to sow the fields with two kinds of seed. When she began to reap and pile up the stacks, she was told that she must leave "gleanings," the poor man's sheaf, and the "corner."

When the harvest time came, she was informed that it was her duty to give the priest's share, consisting of the first and second "tithes." She quietly submitted, and gave what was demanded of her. Then she sold the field, and bought two young ewes, in order that she might use their wool, and profit by their offspring. But, as soon as the ewes gave birth to their young, a priest came, and quoted to her the words of Moses: "Give *me* the first-born, for so the Lord hath ordained." Again she submitted, and gave him the young.

When the time of shearing came, the priest again made his appearance, and said to her that, according to the Law, she was obliged to give him "the shoulder, the two cheeks, and the maw."

In a moment of despair, the widow said: "Let all the animals be consecrated to the Lord!" "In that case," answered the priest, "they belong altogether to me; for the Lord hath said: "Everything consecrated in Israel shall be thine." So, he took the sheep, and went his way, leaving

the widow and her two daughters in great distress, and bathed in tears.¹

A WIFE'S RUSE.

(A RABBINICAL TALE.)

THERE is a Rabbinical law which makes it obligatory upon every Jewish husband to divorce his wife, if after ten years of married life she shall remain childless. Now, there once lived in an Oriental town a man and his wife who were greatly attached to each other, but who had, unfortunately, no children, though they had been married for a considerable time.

When the end of the tenth year of their marriage was approaching, they both went to the Rabbi, and asked him for his advice. The Rabbi listened with great sympathy, but declared his inability to alter or modify the law in their favour. The only suggestion, he said, that he could make, was, that on the last night before their final separation, they should celebrate a little feast together, and that the wife should take some keepsake from her husband which would be a permanent token of her husband's unchangeable affection for her.

¹ *Cp.* The Jewish Encyclopedia, *sub* Satire.

Thus, on the last night, the wife prepared a sumptuous meal for the two of them, and, amidst much merriment and laughter, she filled and refilled her husband's goblet with sparkling wine. Under its influence, he fell into a heavy sleep, and while in this condition, he was carried by his wife's orders to her father's abode, where he continued to sleep till the following morning. When he awoke, and was wondering at his strange surroundings, his cunning wife came smilingly into the room, and said: "Oh, my dear husband, I have actually carried out the Rabbi's suggestion, inasmuch as I have taken away from home a most precious keepsake. This is your own dear self, without whom it would be impossible for me to live."

The husband, moved to tears, embraced her most affectionately, and promised that they should live together to the end. Thereupon they joyfully returned home, and, going again to the Rabbi, they told him what had happened, and asked him for his forgiveness and blessing, which he readily accorded them. And, indeed, the Rabbi's blessing had an excellent result. For after the lapse of some time, they both enjoyed the happiness of fondling a bright little child of their own.

A RABBINICAL STORY OF ALEXANDER
THE GREAT.

ALEXANDER THE GREAT, being on a visit to an Oriental potentate, learned how justice was administered there. Two persons came into court, and invited the king's decision on the following point. The one had bought a mound of rubbish from the other, and on exploring it, found it contained a treasure. He therefore wished to return it to the owner, but the owner refused to accept it. What was there to be done? Now, the decision was that, as it happened that one of the two persons had a son, and the other a daughter, they should be united in marriage, and the treasure should be given to both of them as a dowry.

Alexander, in some surprise, pointed out that in his country the matter would have been differently settled. Both parties would have been put to death, and Government would have appropriated the treasure. The potentate then asked whether there were cattle in his country, and whether the sun shone there and the rain fell. Being answered in the affirmative, he remarked that he thought Providence had meant the rain and sunshine for the cattle only. For

human beings of such inhuman disposition hardly deserved these heavenly boons.

On the termination of the long period, during which the Talmud and some cognate books—the “Midrashim,” for instance—were composed, several centuries passed, during which no book appeared that contained anything satirical. Hebrew satire, however, again made its appearance in some of the literary productions of Hebrew authors who flourished in the Middle Ages, chiefly in Spain, France and Italy. Most prominent among them were, Abraham and Moses Ibn Ezra, Jehudah Halevi, Moses Ibn Chasdai, Kalenymos ben Kalonymos, Joseph Zabara, Judah Sabbatai, and last, but not least, Jehudah Alcharizi, and Immanuel di Roma. Several extracts from the writings of these satirical authors have already appeared in a volume published some time ago by the present writer, under the title of “Hebrew Humour.” But it is intended to quote here a few additional specimens of their literary compositions, and chiefly those that have Jehudah Alcharizi and Immanuel di Roma for their authors.

THE BOASTFUL MERCHANT.

BY JEHUDAH ALCHARIZI (1300.)

HEMAN, the Ezrachite, related the following adventure he met with :—

“ While once travelling in the East, I arrived in a large and populous town. As I passed a small house, I noticed a middle-aged man sitting in front of it, with hands and feet partly bandaged, and with a rather strange and pitiful look about him. And seeing him thus, I could not help asking him, with some sort of commiseration, what it was that brought him to such a deplorable condition. Whereupon the man answered that, in truth, he hardly deserved any expression of pity, as his present suffering was certainly by his own fault. He had, he said, an uncommonly large appetite, and was always ready for a meal. When I heard this, I begged him to tell me his latest adventure, and this he did.

“ A few days ago,” he said, “ I was standing in one of the Bazaars of this town, when I suddenly felt a great desire for a good meal. Unluckily, I had no money with me, and was too far from home to get any. But it so happened that an old acquaintance of mine, a wealthy

merchant whom I had not seen for a long time, passed by, and invited me cordially to dine with him. Needless to say that I gladly accepted the invitation. Now this merchant was known to be a great braggart, and had a very high opinion of himself and of all his belongings. Thus he at once began to talk about his importance in the world of commerce, of the great beauty and virtue of his wife, and of the high attainments of each of his children.

"I listened as politely as I could, expecting all the time that I would soon be rewarded for my patience and attention with a sumptuous meal. But, to my great disappointment, this was not so. For, when arriving at the house, my host conducted me through the various rooms, pointing out the magnificent articles they contained, each of which, he said, was quite unique, and had cost him a large amount of money.

"Presently he took me into his wife's boudoir, and showed me the beautiful couch on which, he said, she generally indulged in her afternoon doze. She, he added, was indeed an angelic creature, and the thought of her charms and ravishing figure made him truly happy.

"By this time I was faint with hunger and thirst, and would certainly have dropped down with utter exhaustion had not at that very

moment the door leading to the dining-room been opened. The vision of this room somewhat revived my drooping spirits, for I saw the servants busy laying the table. My host then introduced to me each of the domestics, telling me their respective names and ages, and the amount of their monthly pay. Likewise he pointed to a little page, who was standing near the door, and who, he said, was a great favourite with all, although he did no work, and only served as an ornament in the house. He got him, he added, in a distant town, where he did a large and increasing profitable business."

Heman, the Ezrachite, then related the concluding part of his strange adventure.

"Having waited for my dinner so long, and thinking that I should soon have to listen to still more of the merchant's boasts, I could endure it no longer. I therefore said curtly to my would-be entertainer that pressing business compelled me to go home at once, but that I would return in good time for the dinner. Saying which, I rushed downstairs as fast as I could, while the merchant gesticulated, and shouted at the top of his voice that I should stop, and not run away like a thief. When the porter at the gate heard this, he raised a hue and cry of thief, thief! A whole crowd pursued, and tried to catch me.

Being in a great rage at not being able to get home quickly, in order to assuage my ravenous hunger, I struck some of my pursuers, and they retaliated. In the end, I came home badly battered and bruised, and the doctor sent me to bed, forbidding me to take any other food than gruel and barley-water. He also bandaged my wounded limbs, which are still sore, and far from being healed. All this trouble would have been avoided, had I only not had such an abnormal appetite. I am, however, thankful to Providence that I escaped with my life."

THE FARMER'S FOLLY.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

HEMAN, the Ezrachite, related the following story :—

"When travelling in the Eastern countries, I one day met an old friend of mine, named Heber, whom I had not seen for a considerable time. He had always been a kind of adventurer, and his ready wit, as well as his quips and pranks, used to amuse me greatly. Being a man of no occupation, he eked out his meagre income by taking advantage of the credulity of the unwary.

He was by that time old and gray, but he had still the same waggish look about him that used to characterise him in his younger days, and this led me to conclude that he was but little changed. To satisfy myself, however, I invited him to take some refreshment with me, and thus I hoped to learn something about his latter-day doings. He accepted my invitation with alacrity, and while we were sitting at our simple meal, he entertained me with an account of some of his adventures, the latest of which was as follows :—

“One day last week,” he said, “I was particularly hungry but, unfortunately, I had no money to buy food with. At the time I noticed a simple-looking farmer coming out of the adjoining Bazaar, and counting the money that he had seemingly just obtained by the sale of some of his produce. I at once went up to him, and embracing him most affectionately, said that I saw in his face an extraordinary resemblance to my dear old friend, Abida Gideon, and that I presumed that he must be a near relative, or perhaps even a son of his.

“The farmer stammered out an excuse, and said that there must be some mistake, as his own name was Adiba Giboni. I replied that, as many years had elapsed since I last saw his father, I might have forgotten the correct spelling of his

name, but that there was no mistaking his likeness to his sire, who was a great wit, and a most enjoyable companion. The farmer again demurred, saying that his father, who was now dead, had never said a witty thing in all his life, but that, on the contrary, his conversation, so far from being amusing, had rather frequently caused dissension in the family circle.

“When the farmer thus mentioned his father’s death, I pretended to be greatly overcome, and even wiped away a tear, which seemed to impress him with the sincerity of my assertion. For, when I invited him to dine with me at one of the best inns in the neighbourhood, he said he would do so with much pleasure, as he would like to spend a few pleasant hours in the company of one of his late father’s intimate friends.”

Heber then went on as follows :—

“It did not take us very long to go to a first-rate inn, where I ordered the best dinner procurable, together with a few bottles of the choicest wine. After a little while, the meal was served, and we demolished it greedily, and with an ever-growing appetite. We also did full justice to the excellent wine, with which we were plentifully supplied by the innkeeper, who, taking us for men of great wealth, thought he would be well paid for his special attention. We stretched ourselves comfort-

ably on two divans which stood opposite to each other in a corner of the room. Presently the farmer fell into a heavy sleep, and I noticed that his face bore a smile of ineffable happiness. I therefore slipped out of the room, and having managed to leave the inn unobserved, I hid myself behind a big tree that stood close by, and awaited developments.

“A little later the innkeeper came in, and presented his by no means small bill to the still happy-looking farmer. But, on seeing it, he pulled a long face, and said that he was not responsible for the bill, as it was his companion who ordered the meal, and was thus morally bound to settle it as soon as he made his appearance. The innkeeper, however, refused to listen to the farmer’s arguments, and insisted, with many threats, on having at once his bill paid. This was ultimately done by the farmer, who went off in a sad frame of mind, while I was greatly amused over the way that I got an excellent meal for nothing.”

When Heber had finished his story, I could not help remarking that, as he was getting old, and near his end, he ought to cease from being a vagabond and adventurer. Besides, I said, that although his pranks were certainly amusing enough, he could not indulge in them without deceiving innocent people, and as such no decent person

could approve of them. But Heber laughed bitterly at my remark, and quoted the following lines, which he himself had written :—

“ Most men are wicked : why should I be good ?
The tiger's claws are meant to bring him food.
I use my cunning as a general rule
To dupe the simple, and beguile the fool.”

PIETY AND REMORSE.

BY SAHULA (1300.)

THERE once lived in an Oriental town a wealthy Hebrew, whose name was Elimelech. Being somewhat of an ascetic, he shunned every kind of enjoyment which life offers to well-to-do people, and devoted much of his leisure to the reading of prayers in the synagogue. These frequent devotional exercises occupied his mind so fully that, though a bachelor, he hardly ever noticed his lonely state. But when he got old and infirm in body and mind, he thought that a help-mate would be an excellent thing for him, and being well off, it was easy for him to carry out his intention. He made, however, one serious mistake, which consisted in this, that, instead of uniting himself to a woman of ripe age and experience, he fixed his eye on a young and

pretty girl, whose name was Tamar. As she was poor and an orphan, too, he easily succeeded in getting her consent to become his wife.

After his marriage, Elimelech continued to attend prayer meetings, leaving his young wife at home to amuse herself as best she could. The only diversion he afforded her, if this really deserved to be called so at all, was to read to her now and again certain homilies, through which he sought to impress her mind with the necessity of implicit obedience, and of being indifferent to his frequent neglect of the duties that wives generally expect from their husbands. On one occasion, he admonished her impressively to be careful not to follow the bad example set by some young women who, having elderly men for their husbands, often took advantage of their absence from home to indulge in flirtations with the gay young men about town.

This admonition, however, produced on Tamar an effect entirely opposite to that contemplated by her husband. For, soon after, when he had gone out to one of his prayer meetings, she left the house, in which she was kept like a prisoner, and went to the public promenade, where crowds of merry folk were walking to and fro. Presently, a young man of pleasant appearance, who was no doubt attracted by Tamar's many charms,

approached her, and greeted her politely. She accepted his salutation with a slight blush and unfeigned pleasure. They then strolled together for a little while, during which time they became enamoured of each other. On the following day the two lovers met again, and when the young man learnt from Tamar how miserable her married life was, he suggested that they should elope, and that, after her aged husband died, they should be united to each other in marriage. This proposition was readily accepted by Tamar, as she had found her union with the pious Elimelech quite intolerable, and was therefore naturally delighted with the prospect of having it soon permanently dissolved.

What then followed can easily be guessed. As Tamar and her lover considered it imprudent to attempt to run away in broad daylight, they decided to wait till Elimelech would go out to a long and protracted prayer meeting in the evening. Thus, when the opportunity arrived and Elimelech was away from home, his wife mounted one of the two horses kept in readiness for her by her lover, and they both merrily galloped away. Tamar, of course, did not forget to take with her all the beautiful and costly presents given to her by her husband on her wedding day.

When Elimelech returned home late at night,

and became aware of what had happened during his absence, he was greatly distressed. Not till then he learnt that the cause of his grief was no other than his own foolishness. Had he, he thought, been less frequently at the synagogue, and had he paid more attention to the comforts of his wife, she would no doubt not have eloped with another man. But his remorse was of no use, and did not improve his awkward position. By his subsequent death he made Tamar's happiness quite complete.

MANOELLO DI ROMA (1400).

THE MESSIAH.

DIVINE Messiah, now we look for thee
With hope and longing and eternal joy ;
For, with thy coming we shall blessings
 see,
Our woes and grievous sufferings to alloy.

Thou wilt revive old Zion's glorious fame,
And we, the race whom all the world deride,
Shall, in our turn, put all our foes to shame,
Who caused us sorrow, and our name decried.

But, I pray thee, come not riding on an
ass,
As thou art pictured in the holy writ ;
If thou in royal splendour dost not pass,
How could we bear the mean disgrace of it ?

TEARS, IDLE TEARS.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

WITH many sweet charms I'm by Nature endowed
My skin is of lilies, of gold are my curls,
And yet I must often sit lonely and bowed ;
I'm one of the bevy of dowerless girls.

By a fond crowd of lovers I'm frequently girt,
And each of them's burning to call me his own,
But, alas, they're less anxious to love and to
flirt,
As soon as the state of my income gets known.

Among my fair sisters the youngest am I,
But 'tis idle for me to yearn to be wed ;
And now the one prayer that I fervently sigh,
Is that I may soon, a fair virgin, be dead.

THE HATEFUL MAN.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

E'EN as the Turk abjures swine-flesh and wine,
E'en as the sluggard hates his work to do,
E'en as the unlovely woman doth decline
Her imperfections in the glass to view ;
E'en as the maidens scorn the backward wight,
Who fails in eagerness to press his suit,
E'en more than all, the grey-beard I detest,
Who makes his love affairs his only quest.

THE DELUSIVE CLERIC.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

THE pulpited parson, who fiercely inveighs
'Gainst the jovial youngster of frolicsome ways,
But who, for his own part, will never decline
The kiss of a woman, or a beaker of wine,
Is like the blind man, who through darkness of
 night,
Guides others to bed with the help of a light.

A MAXIM.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

MAKE every man your friend
However poor or weak,
With every solace tend
The humble and the meek.
Do you ask the reason why?
The giant feels the stinging fly.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

- Q.* Hast thou seen Belinda's lovely eyes?
A. Aye, they are worthy of a royal prize.
Q. Who are her lovers in the West and East?
A. All holy men, some Rabbi and a Priest.
Q. What news is there of Delia, wicked flirt?
A. They lately found her lying in the dirt.
Q. And how with her sweet sister doth it fare?
A. For her repute she doth not greatly care.
Q. Tell me, why Zillah of her spouse complains?
A. Because her flirtation he much disdains.

- Q.* What should his fate be, who neglects his wife?
- A.* He should be shot, and thus bereft of his life.
- Q.* What does a lady from her spouse desire?
- A.* Kisses and embraces, jewels and attire.
- Q.* What shall I do, my wife is such a fright?
- A.* Look not upon her, save when it is night.
- Q.* When do you like your loveless wife the best?
- A.* When she is sleepy, and has gone to rest.

During the Middle Ages several Jewish authors wrote certain Hebrew booklets in rhyme and prose, in which they made the supposed frivolity and fickleness of women the butt of their satire. One of them was Joseph Zabara, whose collection of short tales, entitled "Book of Delight," appeared about the year 1200. Most characteristic among them is one wherein a curious episode is mentioned that had once occurred in the life of a married couple, living in the far East. The tale runs somewhat as follows :—

A certain Arab king was one day discussing with his courtiers the merits and demerits of the gentle sex. They praised the many virtues of women, mentioning particularly the great love and attachment manifested by them towards

their husbands and children. The king, however, did not share their opinion, but, on the contrary, declared emphatically that he considered women to be selfish and deceitful, so much so that their husbands could not with certainty rely upon their keeping faithfully their marriage vow.

The king then suggested to his courtiers that they should, in corroboration of their assertion, point out to him at least one married woman in his dominions, whose unshaken and lasting fidelity to her husband could not possibly be doubted. After the lapse of a few days, the courtiers reported to the king that they had found such a woman in the wife of a wealthy merchant, who was generally believed to be deeply devoted to him and her offspring.

Thereupon the king summoned the merchant to the palace, and, on his arrival, received him most kindly, and spoke to him as follows:—

“I have,” he said, “an only grown-up daughter who is both beautiful and accomplished. She has several admirers, belonging to the highest nobility of the land, but I have resolved not to give her in marriage to any of them. For I would rather prefer having her married to such a one of my subjects who, though of a less high descent, is yet known to lead a simple and honest

life. Now, you are the man whom I have chosen as being the most suitable person to become the consort of my only daughter, the princess. It is true that your present wife is still alive, but you could easily get rid of her by slaying her this or the following night."

When the merchant heard the king's strange proposal, he did not know what to do, and being unable to accept or reject at once the great temptation held out to him by the king, he asked to be permitted to postpone giving his final decision till the following day. This being allowed, he went home greatly dejected in mind, and there found his pretty wife, playing merrily with her two children. He quickly embraced her with the fondness of an ardent lover, and firmly resolved in his mind never to part from her, nor to give her up in exchange for the possession of even the fairest princess in existence.

As the king had certainly expected, the merchant failed to come the following day to the palace, and he therefore summoned his wife secretly to appear before him. He at once expressed his great admiration of her beauty and loveliness, telling her at the same time that he was burning with the desire to marry her, and to raise her to the dignity of a queen. But, first of all, the king added, she must, as the wife

of another man, get rid of him as soon as possible.

When the woman had readily consented to act on the king's suggestion, he gave her a tin sword, but told her not to use it more than once, as he was sure that one blow would be sufficient to put her husband to death.

The woman, after leaving the palace, went home, and prepared a sumptuous meal for her husband, and while eating it, she gave him plenty of strong wine to drink. He soon became intoxicated, and fell into a sound sleep. While in this helpless condition, he was struck on the head by his wife with the tin sword, but the blow did no other harm to him than to awake him from his slumber. When his wife made some plausible excuse, the merchant accepted it without any comment, and fell asleep again.

On the following day, the merchant and his wife were commanded by the king to come to the palace, and were ordered to recount, in presence of the courtiers, the episode that had occurred on the previous night at their house. When this was done, the king said to his courtiers with a triumphant air that he hoped they would henceforth discontinue their praises of the virtues of the gentle sex.

The satirical writings belonging to an early period in the history of Hebrew literature are comparatively few in number, and the extracts from them hitherto given had, of necessity, to be limited in number. But much more numerous are the writings of the same kind that had been composed by Hebrew authors living in Austria and Russia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and it will therefore be possible to quote these more extensively.

It may at first sight seem paradoxical that satire could find expression in an atmosphere of intolerance and persecution, which have always existed, and still exist to a large extent in the aforementioned two countries. But it must not be supposed that the Jewish satirists chose the secular authorities as the targets of their shafts. They, being themselves men of enlightenment and culture, believed, whether rightly or wrongly, that the persecutions to which their co-religionists were subjected were mainly due more to their own faults and failings than to anything else. They perceived that the community were plunged in a fathomless gulf of superstition, and blindly obeyed the behests of their spiritual guides, the majority of whom were not distinguished either for honesty of purpose or clearness of vision. It was, therefore, in the hope of saving them from

utter demoralisation that many of the satires were written.

One of the earliest of those satirists who flourished in Austria in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was Joseph Perl. Born at Tarnopol, in 1774, a son of wealthy parents, young Perl received a liberal education, acquiring thereby such culture and learning as gained for him a prominent position among his fellow-townsmen. He saw, not without deep concern, the deplorable religious and social condition of his Jewish countrymen, and, being fully convinced that this was due to the evil influence exercised upon them by their usually ignorant and superstitious leaders, the so-called "Rebbes," who were averse to all progress and enlightenment, he determined to expose them in their true light. With this object in view, he published a satire in Hebrew, under the pseudonym of "Obadia ben Petachia," in which he attacked the trickeries and secret practices of the "Rebbes," as well as the foolishness and moral degradation of their followers.

It appeared in Vienna, in 1819, under the title of "*Megalleh Temirin*" (the Revealer of Secrets), and immediately created a great sensation among those who lived where the "Rebbe"-fraud and "Rebbe"-worship obtained. It was

written in a corrupt style, being an exact imitation of that usually employed by the "Rebbes" in the letters they wrote to their adherents. It was somewhat akin to the dog-Latin used by the author of the satire well-known under the title of "*Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum*," and may have been modelled thereon. It is quite impossible to preserve its spirit and pungency in an English translation, and therefore no such attempt is made here. The satire in question cannot claim to possess any value, from a literary point of view, but it is certainly interesting as a record of the religious, moral, and social state of the Galician Jews, as it actually was about a century ago.

The greatest and most famous satirist of all the Hebrew writers who flourished in modern times in Austria, or rather Galicia, was Isaac Erter. He was born in the year 1792 in a small Galician village called Jamischock, and died at Brody in 1851. He wrote several satires, the following of which will be quoted here, in a condensed form, as a sample. It is entitled "Taschlich," which term means "throwing" or "shaking," and is used by modern Hebrew writers in connection with the custom prevalent among a certain class of Jews, of going to a river on "Rosh-Ha-Shana" (New Year's Day), and

throwing into it all the crumbs there might be in their pockets. While so doing, they recite the verse to be found in Micah viii. 9, viz. "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the bottom of the sea."

TASCHLICH.

It was New Year's Day, and I was walking leisurely on the bank of the river, not far from the synagogue. Suddenly I lifted up my eyes, and lo! and behold, there was Samael, the Satan, standing close by, with a large number of evil spirits grouped about him. As I had never before been afraid of Satan and his formidable-looking attendants, I approached him, and asked him boldly what particular business had brought him and his noisy retinue to that quiet and peaceful spot.

Thereupon Satan, with a cunning smile on his face, answered that he and his followers had come there to cast nets into the river, and catch all the crumbs that would be thrown there during the next few hours by the many children of the Ghetto. These crumbs that represented allegorically the various sins committed by them during the past year, would be brought before the celestial Council sitting in judgment and

would serve to prove the existence of much wickedness and corruption among the very people who claimed to be, by dint of their supposed great piety and unblemished lives, the special favourites of the Lord of Hosts.

On hearing these caustic reflections on the moral degradation of my Jewish countrymen, I was greatly vexed, and I therefore told him quite frankly that he would have acted more prudently, and would have effected his evil design with much greater success, had he and his attendants stationed themselves by the French and German rivers, where the Jews were notoriously lax. While I was thus arguing with Satan, a great stir arose among the group of the evil spirits. For, at that moment, a huge crowd of festively-dressed people emerged from the synagogue, and came towards the river. On arriving there, they duly shook their garments, and recited the prescribed prayer. Some had a venerable appearance, and seemed to be models of all that was good, and noble, and true. But this was only an illusion. For Satan, taking me aside, remarked of them : " These leaders of the Jewish community, who comprise the Rabbi and the head of the ' Chassidim,' certainly appear to be venerable, and of a meek and humble disposition. But in reality they are extremely proud

and intolerant, and look down with contempt on every person who is neither a member of their family, nor an influential man in the community. I have here a volume, recently published by this very Rabbi, in the preface of which he says of himself that he is the cleverest man in existence, and that his book is a vast treasure of theological knowledge. And yet, as a matter of fact, the book is pure twaddle, which, strange to say, is not even original, as the greater part of it has already appeared in books written by other authors of the theological fraternity."

After a short pause, Satan referred to the presence of the head of the "Chassidim." He was clad in snow-white garments, and had a crafty and jovial look about him. "This well-fed man," said Satan, "is worshipped by his devotees, who attribute to him the possession of supernatural powers, by means of which he is able to work miracles at all times. They come from all parts of the country to obtain his advice on their private matters, and pay him royally for his trouble. But I know him to be a charlatan and a deceiver, and he is, indeed, more guilty of transgressing the laws of decency and good conduct than those who come to seek his aid in winning forgiveness for their secret sins."

Satan was about to continue his revelations

in regard to the real character of some other reverend signors that were gathered by the river's side, when he was interrupted by a tremendous shout of jubilation, coming from the evil spirits, who were drawing bulging nets from the water. And with the sound I awoke, and found that I had been dreaming a dream.

Another writer of the Galician school of satirists who deserves some attention, is M. D. Brandstadter. Like *Perl* and *Erter*, he attacks the fanaticism of the spiritual leaders of his compatriots, together with the latter's ignorance and superstition ; and in so doing, he describes with pleasant humour some of the episodes of life among the Galician Jews. One of his satires, entitled "Ma'asseh Norah," runs in a somewhat abridged translation, as follows :—

In a small Jewish community in Galicia, the members of which were noted for their bigotry and ignorance, there lived a wealthy Jew who, both on account of his riches and education, occupied a prominent position among them. Being a great benefactor to the local charities and the poorer members of his congregation, he was elected by them as their President. Now, it so happened that, after the death of his first wife, he

married another Jewish lady who, having enjoyed a modern education in a Continental boarding-school, was less superstitious in religious matters than her neighbours. Thus, on her wedding-day, she absolutely refused to allow her hair to be shorn off her head, and to wear instead the unsightly wig, which quasi-religious custom has always demanded should be worn by all Jewish married women in the community.

This unprecedented behaviour greatly enraged the local Rabbi, who, being both a bigot and a fanatic, had not the tact to pretend to ignore the whole affair. He therefore planned an ingenious scheme, by which he hoped to bring home to the fair culprit the enormity of her offence. It was this. One day, when the President of the congregation happened to be away, the Rabbi sent his beadle round to all members of his flock to inform them that, owing to a pestilence having broken out in their midst, he wished them to attend a special divine service to be held on the following day at the local synagogue. This unexpected summons created quite a stir in the community and all its members flocked next day to their place of worship. After the precentor had recited some introductory prayers, the Rabbi ascended the pulpit, used by him only on very rare occasions, and delivered in the Jewish jargon

a so-called religious discourse. In the first part of it, a Talmudical theme was minutely discoursed by him, the question being : What compensation was due by the owner of an ox, which maliciously gored a cow, to the owner of the cow? (*Cf.* Talmud Babli, Tractat Baba Kamma.) He then went on to refer to the wickedness of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, whose disobedience of God's command led to the visitation of a plague that carried off numerous innocent beings, including his own beloved eldest son. A similar plague, the Rabbi continued, with great emotion, was raging in their own community, and all these misfortunes were, in his opinion, caused by the wicked disregard of the Rabbi's injunction by a female Pharaoh—who dwelt in their midst. This was Zillah, the wife of the President of their community, who persisted in wearing her hair cut short, according to the newest fashion of the day, instead of covering it with a wig as prescribed by the Rabbinical law. In consequence of this unpardonable moral crime, several infants belonging to the community had recently died a premature death, including the latest triplets, with whom their beadle had been presented by his wife.

And having quoted a few more instances of the punishments inflicted by the Almighty on innocent

beings on account of the misdeeds of some of His erring creatures, the Rabbi closed his discourse by asking of the community to call a meeting at once, to discuss the whole situation in private. At the meeting, the Elders resolved, in compliance with the proposition made by the presiding Rabbi, to send one of their officials to fetch the President's wife, so that she might be informed that she alone was responsible for the death of a good many infants in the community by her malicious refusal to wear a wig. But, when each official declared with tears in his eyes that, if he were deputed on this mission, he would lose his scanty livelihood, and that of his ever-increasing family, the Rabbi and the Elders decided to go themselves and interview the President's wife in her own home.

This decision was at once carried into effect. The Rabbi, in his capacity as spokesman of the deputation, repeated to the lady the contents of the latter part of the sermon, which had been delivered a few hours before in the synagogue. At the same time, he took out from a little black bag which he carried in his hand, a pair of scissors and an old worn-out wig, which he presented to her for her immediate use. Now, at first, she was rather amused at being seriously told that she, and she alone, was the cause of the premature

death of some infants in the community, but before long her smile vanished, giving place to her indignation, especially when the previously-mentioned repulsive head-gear was offered to her as an acceptable present. "It is a great pity," she said, "that you should have wasted so much time and energy on your present fruitless errand, for I shall never consent to use the scissors and the wig, which you have taken the trouble to bring with you here. But, if you should decide to visit me again with the same object in view, I am determined to commit an act which may cause the greatest injury to all of you. I have hitherto worn my hair according to the present fashion, viz. cut short, and the consequence has been, as you say, that a pestilence has broken out in the community, cutting short the lives of some of their infants. Now, mind, if you do not cease to interfere with what I do or leave undone, I shall in future let my hair grow several inches longer, and you will have to bear the consequences. The plague, as you call it, is mild enough now, but the longer my hair grows, the more deadly it will become, and will carry off you and all the other fanatics in the community in a very short time indeed." Hearing these threats, the Rabbi and his retinue were greatly alarmed, and speedily left the house, never to return there again. This

"dreadful story" is stated by the author to be founded on real facts, and to have been told without much exaggeration.

THE DISAPPOINTED "REBBE."

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

VRETNA is a small, insignificant town in Galicia. Its chief claim to notoriety rests upon the fact that, whenever any outbreak occurred in the province, whether famine, pestilence, or revolution, it was there that the earliest symptoms were detected. The inhabitants of the Ghetto, moreover, enjoyed the reputation of being more bigoted, more gullible, and more credulous of the supernatural powers popularly attributed to the "Rebbes" than any of their contemporaries. There was thus a constant stream of itinerant "Rebbes" flowing through the town who, for a small consideration, were prepared to administer blessings or advice.

Now, it so happened that one day a Rebbe, named Yokton, accompanied by a few followers, made his appearance in Vretna. Although he was unknown there, his disciples soon noised it abroad that he was a man of such exceptional

holiness that the achievements of other "Rebbes" would pale before the miracles he proposed to perform.

Before long, his apartments were crowded with persons being anxious for his advice or his blessings. Among them was Reb Dan, a wealthy but rather ignorant man, who wished to consult him about his daughter Shoshannah. She was, he said, a handsome girl, twenty years of age, but refused to marry the man he had chosen for her. True, he was somewhat of a hunchback, and a fool, to boot, but then he was extremely religious, and some of his family were deeply versed in Talmudical and Cabbalistic lore. What did the all-powerful Rebbe advise him to do?

The Rebbe, after some deliberation, said he was convinced that the girl was possessed of an evil spirit, most probably of Satan himself, which, he thought, he would exorcise if he saw her. His disciples hastened with the news to Shoshannah. They were met by her old nurse Deborah, who had been deserted by her husband many years ago, and had since then been living in Reb Dan's house, first as his daughter's nurse, and then as her companion. She was greatly shocked at the suggestion that Shoshannah should visit the Rebbe, and insisted on accompanying

her. She assumed a heavy veil, and desired Shoshannah to do the same, but Shoshannah laughed, and, treating the whole affair as a little joke, said she would go as she was.

They were received by the Rebbe in a somewhat dingy and dark room. Deborah, casting a furtive glance at him, uttered a subdued cry of surprise, but this passed unnoticed by the Rebbe, who had eyes only for Shoshannah. He spoke to her kindly and endearingly, telling her to go home, when she would soon hear good news. He then gave strict orders that he was on no account to be disturbed, and locked his door.

Shortly afterwards he was heard using dreadful imprecations, and stamping his feet. It was as though he were engaged in conflict with a terrible adversary. Then a deep silence ensued, and the Rebbe appeared pale and dishevelled. He then directed Reb Dan to be summoned, and when he came, he told him that, after a tremendous struggle, he had succeeded in worsting Satan, who was enamoured of Shoshannah, and had forbidden her to marry an ordinary person. Further, he had been told by Satan that he was a great favourite at the Council of Heaven, and that at their last meeting it had been decided that he and Shoshannah were to be united in marriage. So, in order to save her

soul from everlasting perdition, he was ready to marry her that very night.

Reb Dan was delighted. He ran home to give his daughter the happy tidings, and the Rebbe's followers, who foresaw a whole week's merry-making, also greeted her with joyful acclamation. She, however, received the news with a flood of tears, and implored her father to give her a few days' time. But he was obdurate, and told her to get ready, as married that evening she should surely be. Thereupon, in her bewilderment, she flew to her Deborah for advice. "Be calm, my child," quoth the old crone, "the marriage shall not take place, for it will be unlawful. Know, then, that Rebbe Yokton is no other than my perfidious husband, who deserted me about twenty years ago!" So what she intended to do was to impersonate Shoshannah at the wedding, and as it would take place at dead of night, she would not be recognised.

The plan fell out as she had arranged. The first part of the ceremony was concluded, and no one suspected that the bride was anyone but the lovely Shoshannah. When, however, the time came for the bride to drink of the cup of wine reached to her by the officiating "*Chazan*," the Rebbe looked, and lo! there stood old Deborah, his deserted, but lawful wife. Without much ado,

she told the assemblage the whole of her story, and in the great uproar and confusion that followed, the holy man slipped off, and disappeared in the distant darkness.

Shoshannah was subsequently married to the man of her own choice, for her father had meanwhile become more wise and more practical. But it is not known whether the Rebbe's exposure led to any permanent change in the Rebbe-worship so often manifested by the inhabitants of the Vretna Ghetto.

Russia has also produced a good many Hebrew satirists, the most prominent of whom is Leon Gordon, who was born at Wilna, in the year 1831. His gift of satirical humour was chiefly directed against the Jewish fanatic, so frequently met with in his and in other countries. He considered him to be, to a great extent, the cause of the misery and degradation under which the majority of his Jewish compatriots laboured, and it is chiefly against the slavish adherence to Rabbinical laws and enactments that his efforts were directed. The following satire is very characteristic in its way, dealing as it does with a tragic comedy that was once played on the first Passover night (the so-called "Seder" night)

in a humble Jewish family. It has for its title the two Aramaic words, "Askka D'rispac" (A Waggon's Axle), alluding to an old historical incident in the war of *Bar Kochba*, which took place in the Palestinian city, Bethar, between 132 and 135 C.E. There it was a small thing, such as a waggon's axle, which sealed the city's doom, and in Gordon's story a grain of corn, found on "Seder" night by the housewife in the soup-tureen, wrecked the happiness of a whole family. The tale, somewhat abridged, is as follows :—

"There once lived in a small Russian town a Jewish coachman, named Eliphelet, who made but a very scanty living by his occupation. Although the members of the small congregation to which he belonged were all more or less orthodox, he himself was not a strict observer of the Rabbinical laws, but he made it a point to spend the Sabbath and all the great festivals at home with his wife and children. Now, it so happened that one year the winter was specially severe in Russia, and his usual scanty income was even smaller than before. But, he still arranged to put by a few coins every week, which were intended to be devoted to the purchase of those special articles of food that are to be found in every orthodox household during the Passover week.

"At last the long-looked-for festival arrived, and on the first night of it, which is distinguished from all the other nights by some special religious ceremonies performed thereon in almost every Jewish home, Eliphelet, clad in festive garments, was sitting in his best room at the head of the table. Everything round him was looking bright and clean, and seeing the happy faces of his children, he felt himself extremely happy. Sarah, his wife, was not yet present, as she was still busy in the kitchen with the preparation of the festive meal. Like all the Russian women of the same type, she was ignorant and superstitious, and her knowledge of her religion went no further than to tell her what things might and what things might not be eaten. Now, while Eliphelet and his children were lustily chanting the songs of the early part of the 'Hagadah,' a cry of anguish from the kitchen struck terror into their souls, and, a few moments later, Sarah, with a pallid face, rushed into the room, and through her tears revealed the cause of her misery. She had discovered a grain of corn in the soup! She was afraid to dish it up, or, in fact, to bring the rest of the night's meal without the Rabbi's express permission.

"When Eliphelet heard his wife's terrible news he was paralysed. There was but little doubt

in his mind that the Rabbi, if consulted, would at once declare that every particle of food in the house, together with all the kitchen utensils, must be discarded during the whole Passover week. He therefore forbade her, under threats of violence, to consult him. Then, seeing the children crying for want of food, he gave them something to eat, and he himself ate a sorrowful and meagre repast. But poor Sarah fasted all night, and on the following morning, while her husband and children were still asleep, she went stealthily to the Rabbi and told him all that had happened during the previous night. And he, without a moment's reflection on all the painful circumstances of the case, at once directed that neither the food nor the kitchen utensils were to be used during the Passover week. Further, he said, that her husband was guilty of having broken one of the Rabbinical laws, for which moral crime he would be presently punished with imprisonment; and he ordered two of his accredited officers to fetch him, and to consign him to jail. The officers immediately carried out their order, and Eliphelet spent his days of confinement in great affliction of mind and heart. When, in due course, he was released, he was filled with repugnance towards his wife, who had brought all this trouble upon him. He divorced her soon after, his household

was broken up, and the domestic happiness of the family vanished for ever. All this misfortune was thus due to a grain of corn found in the soup on the first night of Passover."

Apart from its obvious moral, the satire throws a good deal of light on the arbitrary powers possessed by the Rabbis in the Ghetto of the days of Nicholas I. To our modern notions it seems monstrous that the ecclesiastical authorities in Russia should have control over the religious liberties of the person, but, if Gordon is to be believed, it was by no means uncommon there.

"SHALET."

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

THERE is a dish well-known in many Jewish households, and its name is Shalet. Set in the oven on the Friday, it does not make its appearance until the midday of the Sabbath. Toothsome it is, and of grateful savour. Who does not know Heine's encomium thereon in his "Princess Sabbath," where he speaks of—

"Shalet beauteous, heavenly spark, daughter of Elysium"?

The satire which is reproduced here in a condensed form, runs as follows :—

An itinerant Jewish preacher, commonly known as a Maggid, once came to a little Russian town, called Dribishock, where there was a small but highly orthodox Jewish community. The Maggid readily responded to the invitation to give a religious discourse on a Saturday morning in the Synagogue. His text was "Savoury Meat," as mentioned in the twenty-seventh chapter of the first book of Moses. This savoury meat, said the preacher, was no other than the common Shalet, yet it was specially delicious, because, according to an old Rabbinical tradition, there were among its ingredients a couple of calves' feet. He then went on enlarging upon this theme, and the whole discourse was listened to with marked attention by all the congregants, and more especially by the women-folk.

Calves' feet were soon at a premium, and with them the Saturday Shalet obtained an unexampled popularity. The two leading ladies in the congregation were the wives of the Rabbi and the President. The latter had won the dignity of his office for two reasons. In the first place, he held an appointment under the Russian Government, which invested him with the power of collecting all the taxes, including the meat tax,

due by the Jewish inhabitants of Dribishock. And then, his charitable disposition made him very popular in the community at large. His wife sometimes took advantage of this, and did certain little things which roused the anger and displeasure of the Rabbi's wife.

Now, she once invited some of her non-Jewish friends to dine with her on a certain Saturday afternoon, to acquaint them with the famous Shalet. She, therefore, bought up and removed all the calves' feet that had remained in the butcher's shop, including those which had been set apart for the Rabbi's house. The Rabbi's wife, on sending to enquire why her orders had not been carried out, was told the reason.

Deeply incensed, she invoked her husband's aid. He, poor man, remonstrated with her mildly, but she told him that, if he allowed this to pass unnoticed, she would become the laughing-stock of the community. He must, therefore, in his capacity as Rabbi of the community, forbid at once the use of Shalet. She would thus regain her prestige, and would have the satisfaction of having worsted the President's lady.

When the Rabbi saw his wife's tears, he knew that his refusal would cost him his peace and tranquillity of mind. He therefore sent for the beadle, and gave him a paper with instructions to

read it out at the conclusion of the Sabbath morning service. This was done, and it was announced that the Rabbi strictly forbade the use of that day's Shalet, and that at the end of the afternoon service he would give his reasons. Naturally everyone refrained from using the Shalet, excepting the President and his wife, who suspected that the Rabbi's lady was at the bottom of the prohibition.

The Rabbi's discourse was duly delivered. After discoursing a Talmudical thesis on some animals mentioned in the Bible, he went on to speak of the calf. Calves' feet were an important ingredient in the preparation of Shalet, but so large had been the demand for them that he suspected the butcher might have supplemented his stock from forbidden sources. He therefore considered it incumbent upon him to suggest that they should abstain from all meat until a more trustworthy butcher was appointed. He also impressed upon his hearers the necessity of their destroying all their kitchen utensils, and of replacing them by new ones.

The Rabbi's decision produced the most disastrous results. As the use of meat was stopped in the community, the usual tax thereon was not forthcoming, and thus the benefit ceased that several charitable institutions had derived

from it. Nay, through this adverse circumstance, even the Rabbi's scanty income was seriously affected, and all this was due to his wife not getting the calves' feet with which she would have been able to make the Shalet !

Leon Gordon's best satires were written in verse form. The two following may serve here as specimens of the rest :—

I.

THE FATTED GEESSE.

IN a little Russian village
Lived a pious widowed dame,
Who sold poultry for a living,
And Rebecca was her name.
Once, 'twas in the heart of winter,
Rebecca bought—and bought them cheap—
A lovely pair of snowy goslings,
Which she carried home to keep.
'Neath her couch she softly laid them,
Watched them with a mother's care,
Grudged herself her slender substance—
They had plenty, and to spare.

Proud, indeed, was poor Rebecca
After two months' cossetting,
For her geese might now profusely
Grace the table of a King.
How then could she best dispose them ?
Clearly now her way she saw ;
The week of Passover was just near,
When good eating was the law.
" All the tit-bits," so she pondered,
" Some rich man will surely take,
And his coins will buy us raiments,
And a wealth of *Matzo* cake.
But the young and luscious giblets,
These will feed my girl and boy ;
How we'll feast on them together,
What a *Pessach* we'll enjoy ! "
Ah, 'twas but an idle fancy,
Fated soon to fade away,
Like a lovely dreamland vision,
Doomed to pass at break of day.

After that the fatted goslings
Fell beneath the butcher's claws ;
Lo ! there were some tiny splinters
Sticking in their tender maws.
Swift she hied her to the Rabbi,
And, in sorrow-laden words,

Begged him for her children's welfare
Not to interdict the birds.
But the Rabbi, fat, well-looking,
Would not hear the widow out ;
" Geese like these," he said, " are never
For *my* flock, the true, devout.
And as for your children starving,
Yield not thus to foolish cares,
If you go into the Ghetto,
You can BEG *your* bread—and theirs ! "

II.

A CURIOUS INCIDENT.

A WEALTHY Jew, alas, a miser,
When he could no longer cope
With his ailments, called the Doctor—
Doctor said there was no hope.
But in all the miser's household
Neither wife nor child pretend
Any sorrow at the notion
Of his fast-approaching end.
For she is already dreaming
Of a happier nuptial ring,
And the children wait the riches
Which his death to them will bring.

And the pleasant prospect pleases
E'en the undertaker's crew,
For their fees will buy them liquor,
And inebriate joys renew.
And the starving Jewish student
Hopes to win his slender dole,
For his mumbling over *Kaddish*,
To alloy the miser's soul.
Joyful was the suffering Rabbi—
Him the miser hated well—
But his funeral oration
Flattered more than words can tell.
"Surely this," he calculated,
"Is a hundred roubles worth ;
So I shall without a murmur
Quit this uncongenial berth.
Why should I not take a journey
To the Holy Land? The mould
Of the sacred Mount of Olives
Could be profitably sold
To the pious, who would place it
In their dear ones' graves ; not least
Think upon the citrons, myrtles,
Produce of the gorgeous East !
Surely, I can find a market
In this very town, I deem—
Then farewell the starving Rabbi—
What a fascinating dream !"

But, alas, for all their visions,
Soon the fatal tidings flew,
That the miser's state was better—
Took his gruel and liked it too !
Wife and children, needy students,
All of them were smitten dumb,
Woe, too, for the famished Rabbi,
Seeing all his hopes succumb.
Gloomy were the undertakers,
Baffled on enjoyment's brink,
So they got them to a tavern
And submerged their cares in drink.
"Well-a-day," said one among them,
"Many griefs we can abate,
All save death, so master miser
Will be ours or soon or late."
"True enough," replied his neighbour,
"But which of us can surely say,
That we'll hold our present billets
If we live to see that day ?"

THE DOT OF THE LETTER "YOD."

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

IN a Russian town, called Ayolon, there lived a well-to-do Jewish shopkeeper, who had an only

daughter named Bath Shua. She was young and good-looking, and possessed some accomplishments; and there was every probability that, had she married a more or less educated man, her married life would have been a happy one. But, unfortunately for her, her father, being both a bigot and an ignoramus, gave her away, without first consulting her, to Hillel, a poor and ill-bred student of Jewish theology. He was supposed to be well-versed in Rabbinic lore, but otherwise he had nothing attractive about him. His face was shrivelled, his eyes were round like a calf's, and his locks resembled the tails of apes, so that it was but natural that Bath Shua, after her marriage, was far from happy.

Bath Shua's father supported them as long as he lived, but when he died, a few years after the marriage, leaving but little behind him, her husband left her, and went abroad to seek his fortune. He finally settled at Liverpool, whence he wrote that he could barely support himself, much less her and her two children. She therefore opened a little store, by means of which she was able to earn a scanty livelihood.

During that time, she happened to make the acquaintance of a young bachelor, named Fabi, who was the superintendent of a railway, and had a substantial income. He was struck with her

beauty and intelligence, and learning, moreover, the sad story of her married life, he took so great an interest in her that he proposed to make her his wife, as soon as she would be legally freed from her careless and heartless husband. He accordingly wrote to the latter who, in his answer, expressed his willingness to send his wife a bill of divorce ("Get"), provided that a certain sum of money was sent to enable him to go to America. Fabi complied with the condition, and, in due course, the "Get" arrived which was soon after transmitted to the local Rabbi.

On the day when the ceremony of divorce was to take place a large crowd of spectators assembled, among whom were naturally Bath Shua and her lover, who, with beating hearts, looked forward to the termination of the performance. But the Rabbi, who was devoid of pity and sense, declared, after having looked for a moment at the "Get," that it was invalid, as the husband's name Hillel was spelled without a "Yod." The Rabbi's decision was final, and Bath Shua, poor soul, had to face life-long desolation, solely because the Rabbi was ignorant of the rules of the Hebrew grammar !

Peter, or Perez Smolenskin, also occupied a prominent place among the little band of Hebrew

satirists that flourished in Russia in the nineteenth century. He was born at Monastirschina, government Moghilef, in the year 1842, and, after a life of penury and hardship, died at Meran, Austria, in 1885. His Hebrew novels, written in a humorous vein, depict the life in the Ghetto with artistic skill. In one of them, entitled "Keburath Chamor" (the Burial of an Ass), the author takes a dish of pancakes as his theme. The story, somewhat condensed, is as follows :—

THE MISSING PANCAKES.

I.

THERE is somewhere in Russia a little town called Kassula, which once had, and may still have, a Ghetto. It differed very little in its essence and nature from other Chettos, except, perhaps, that superstition played a larger part in the lives of the residents than elsewhere. They believed, for instance, that the loft of their old and awe-inspiring synagogue was haunted by the souls of departed members, as well as by numerous demons and evil spirits. Hence, no one ever ventured to go up there, except old Isaac, the grave-digger, who, as men of his calling proverbially are, was of a cheerful and humorous temperament. This sense

of humour was inherited by his only son, Hyam, whose boyish pranks frequently got him into difficulties.

Hyam attended the private school kept by Zebulun, a much-suffering little man, who, in spite of his hard work, scarcely ever enjoyed a proper meal. His famished appearance, however, aroused no sympathy in the breasts of any of his pupils, save that of Hyam, who often said to himself, "If old Zebulun were better fed, he would be better capable of enjoying my little jokes." The opportunity came sooner than he had expected, and in this manner :

The most important of the societies in the Kassula Ghetto was the Burial Society. Not only was it in a sound financial position, but its President, Reb Getz, was also invested with powers, of which none of the other societies could boast. In fact, he was much more feared and respected in the community than anyone else, not excepting even the Rabbi, although the only qualification he had for his post was his being a comparatively rich man. It lay, for instance, in his power to put an indelible black mark against the name of any poor man in the community—he did not dare to interfere with the wealthy—who was reputed to be lax in the observances of the synagogue. "He shall be buried with the

burial of an ass," was the entry in the Society's archives.

One of the rules of the Society was that once a year during the merry week of *Purim*, the members should celebrate its foundation by a sumptuous banquet, to be held within the precinct of the synagogue, and that the cost thereof should be defrayed out of its funds. This rule was always strictly observed by the members who, after having spent the greater part of the day in the synagogue in fasting and prayer, enjoyed the more the excellent repast that was waiting for them in the yard. There various tasty dishes were placed on tables, the savour of which spread through the Ghetto, and was enviously inhaled by all—from the famished Rabbi to the starving Zebulun.

The favourite dish of all was one of highly-spiced and sweetly-flavoured pancakes, and the whole banquet would have been considered an utter failure, had this delightful dish failed to make its due appearance. Now, it so happened that on the very day when young Hyam expressed the wish to give his teacher a savoury meal, he heard that the annual banquet of the Burial Society was going to be held at the usual place. He therefore went up to the loft of the synagogue, and, waiting there till darkness set in, he came

down to the yard. Finding no one there, he quickly took hold of the dish that was nearest to him, and ran with it into Zebulun's room. It was the dish that contained the lovely pancakes. Zebulun was at first not inclined to eat them, but hearing young Hyam's arguments that they would not be missed, and that it was, besides, the merry Purim week, when a joke was admissible, he consumed part of them with great enjoyment and relish. He even laughed heartily at the trick, and Hyam himself was extremely glad, when he saw for the first time the joy on his teacher's face. The former then returned to the loft of the synagogue to await developments.

II.

Below in the yard the President and the members of the Burial Society were seated at the banquet, and everything went on merrily up to the moment when the dish of pancakes was to make its appearance. But, lo, it was missing! A roar of indignation arose at this sacrilege, and voices advocating revenge and punishment of the culprit were heard on all sides. This unusual disturbance soon attracted a motley crowd of people, including many of the old women of the neighbourhood, whose screams and lamenta-

tions added to the general confusion. Presently the President ordered the archives of the Society to be fetched, and directed that the thief, when identified, should be marked down therein as being condemned to be buried with the burial of an ass.

On hearing the President's pronouncement, young Hyam cast through the window of the loft a large quantity of rubbish that had been heaped up there for many years past. And amidst the general cry : " The ghosts and demons are coming," and the stampede that followed, he escaped unobserved, and returning to Zebulun, told him in a jocular way all that had just happened in the yard. Zebulun, however, did not share his pupil's mirth, but told him quite seriously that he must henceforth consider himself an outlaw in the Ghetto, as he would surely soon be identified as being the person who stole the pancakes, and would have to bear the consequences. Young Hyam took the hint, and, leaving Kassula, he went to a neighbouring town where there was a Rabbi who, being famous for his extensive Talmudical knowledge, had attracted a number of theological students as his pupils. Young Hyam soon became one of them, and, by dint of his inborn capacity, combined with his gift of natural humour, he became, in the course of several

years' study, the Rabbi's special favourite. One day, therefore, when Reb Getz wrote to the Rabbi, asking him to recommend him the best of his pupils as a suitable bridegroom for his only daughter, young Hyam was named and accepted. Soon after, he went home in company with his future father-in-law, and, as a mutual attachment sprang up between him and his beautiful bride, they were, after a brief engagement, united in a happy marriage.

III.

As in most of the other Ghettos in existence, there was in Kassula a communal house, known by the name of "Beth Hamidrash." There communal business was transacted, and it specially served as a divorce court, where dissatisfied couples obtained judicial separation from each other by the granting of a so-called "Get" by the husband to his wife. One large room in the house was generally used by a small number of poor and old men who devoted their time partly to prayer and the study of the law, and partly to idle gossip. "What a lucky thing," said one of those present, "is the recent marriage of young Hyam, the son of the late gravedigger, Isaac, to the charming daughter of the wealthy President of the Burial Society!" "Yes," said another

"he is lucky, indeed, and such good luck is quite rare, and only falls to one man among a million of people. But young Hyam is said to be exceptionally clever, and to know the greater part of the Talmud by heart. Well, let him enjoy the happiness as long as it lasts. For, who knows what the next hour may bring."

While these idlers were thus discussing Hyam's fortunate marriage, their conversation was suddenly interrupted by the unexpected entrance of the President of the Burial Society, followed by the Rabbi and some other officials of the community. They had come there with the object of having the "Get" drawn up, which was to annul Hyam's marriage! Hyam had told his young wife of some of his youthful escapades, including the episode of the missing pancakes, and she, thinking it a capital joke, told it to her mother, who repeated it to her husband.

The latter was furious against his son-in-law, who, having been doomed to be buried with the burial of an ass, would necessarily disgrace the whole family. But, as neither she nor her husband could be induced to consent to this cruel parting, they both left their happy home, and went to live abroad. Here they suffered great hardships, to which they ultimately suc-

cumbed. Thus, a missing dish of pancakes was the cause of two young lives being sadly wrecked.

THE "CHEDER."

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

I WAS of a very tender age, when I lost my parents, and the only near relatives I had were an uncle and an aunt. He was a well-to-do money changer, but noted for his meanness and vulgarity, whilst she, never having had any children of her own, hated intensely those of other people, including myself. Yet, she felt bound to accede to her husband's proposal that, in consideration of the moral obligation they had to me as a relative and an orphan, I should stay in their house, until some other arrangements could be made.

When I arrived at my new home, I found it comfortable enough, but owing to the coldness with which I was treated by my uncle and aunt I was far from happy there. One morning, he sent for me, and told me that I was to pack my belongings and go with him to the local *Cheder*, where I was to live and be educated. At first, I jumped at the idea, but when I saw the house

which was to be my future home, my heart sank within me. It was more of a dirty hovel than a house. It was situated, like most of the *Chedarim* that abound in Russia and elsewhere, at the corner of a dark alley, and close to it was a big swamp, redolent with evil-smelling refuse. The house contained only one room of a somewhat large size which seemingly served its occupant—commonly called “Melamed” (teacher)—both as a class and a dining-room. The furniture was an old table and a few greatly damaged wooden benches, on which some boys were sitting, listening to the sing-song voice of their teacher. In one corner stood a cradle, in which the teacher’s youngest baby was being lulled to sleep by its sour-tempered mother.

To brighten up the darkness of the room there were two big picture frames on the wall, that contained, instead of figures, two inscriptions in large Hebrew characters of deep red colour, viz., “On this side hovers the spirit of Life,” and “This is a remembrance of the Destruction of the Temple.”

The “Melamed” himself was a little dark-haired, famished-looking man, with a squint in the right eye, which served to keep his pupils, and sometimes his wife, in awe and subjection. He was wearing a loose and ill-fitting dressing-

gown which, owing to long wear and tear, had lost its original colour, but had acquired a variety of new ones. My uncle's appearance caused him some excitement, because he knew him by reputation to be rich and influential in the community. Imagine then his delight, when my uncle whispered in his ear the unexpected pleasant intelligence that I, his nephew, was intended to be his boarder and pupil. After all the arrangements had been satisfactorily concluded, my uncle left me and returned home.

Meanwhile the "Melamed" was so greatly overjoyed at his unforeseen good luck that he told his pupils to go and play for a little while outside the house, cautioning them also to mind the swamp. The boys rushed out of the room, as if released from imprisonment, and I, too, followed their example. But, as I ran out, I unfortunately tumbled over a large earthen jug, filled with unclean water that was standing near the door, so that it broke, and its contents were spilled.

When the "Melamed's" wife saw what I had done, she jumped at me, and, seizing me by the hair, belaboured me most mercilessly. Fortunately, however, her husband interfered, and said that he would divorce her forthwith if she did not let me go at once. She released me on

this threat, and I went out to join my school-fellows at play, but I found them sitting listlessly round the swamp, envying, as it seemed, the freedom enjoyed by the insects that were swarming there.

When I told them about the incident of the broken jug, they did not dare to laugh, for at that moment they noticed the "Melamed" with his squinting eye beckoning them to come in again to work. By a curious coincidence, one of the elder boys had to read and translate a portion of a Talmudical thesis on the theme, "He broke the jug," and he read it with such suggestiveness that all the boys burst out laughing. So infectious was their merriment that even the usually ill-tempered "Melamed" could not help joining in, especially as he knew the reason thereof, and being now in the best of humours, he allowed them to get home earlier than usual. He, too, went out for a stroll, as his midday meal was not yet ready, and he did not care to stay at home just then, after having a little while before threatened his wife with divorce proceedings.

Instead of him, I, the new boarder and pupil, had to remain in the house, and to be in near contact with his wife. But the moment we were alone, she looked at me furiously, and, seizing her husband's cane, made for me. I was, however, too

quick for her, and dashing out of the house, I ran and ran till I was quite exhausted, and had to sit down on a mile-stone on the main road to enjoy a little rest. I then went on wandering about aimlessly, and thanked Providence that my experience of the life in the "Cheder" was but an extremely short one.

Another author of some delightful Hebrew satires is Mendel Dolitzki, who was born in Bielistock (Russia) in 1856. One of them is entitled "Likkuy Sheney Ha-Meoroth" (The extinguishing of Two Great Lights), and reveals some chicanery of two opposition "Rebbes." It runs, in a greatly condensed form, as follows :—

In a little Russian town, called "Fools' Hill," where a vast number of the so-called "Chassidim" were gathered, there lived a famous "Rebbe," whose name was Lemech. He had the reputation among his numerous devotees of possessing divine or supernatural powers which enabled him to perform miracles. He could heal the sick, help barren woman to become mothers, and drive out the most stubborn evil spirit. Clad in long white garments, he spent the greater part of the day in the seclusion of his study, where he was said by his followers to be battling with Satan and

other angels of destruction ; and, being supposed to enjoy the Almighty's special favour, it was but natural that his prayers always won him the day. As Rebbe Lemech's reputation as a wonder-worker spread to all parts of the country, numerous clients flocked daily to "Fools' Hill" to consult him about their private affairs. But only those who were able to pay handsomely for the privilege were admitted to his presence.

Thus, during the period of twenty years, which Rebbe Lemech spent at "Fools' Hill" in doing his sacred work, he amassed a large fortune which, though an open despiser of worldly possessions, he secretly invested in landed property, and he ultimately became the owner of a large and beautiful house, standing in its own grounds, with a large vineyard and orchard attached. He also kept a carriage and a pair of fine horses, which helped him to show his independence, and enabled him to make his own terms with clients, who were anxious to have a private interview with him.

But, one day, something unforeseen happened in "Fools' Hill" that threatened to destroy for ever the happiness of Rebbe Lemech and of his family. An opposition Rebbe, Dotz by name, came and settled there with a small retinue of Chassidim ! Soon after, the followers and supporters of Rebbe Dotz made it known all over

the town that he was gifted with extraordinary supernatural powers, and that he wrought more wonders in a day than Rebbe Lemech did in a whole month. The effect of this was that the majority of Rebbe Lemech's constituents seceded from him, and bestowed their patronage on the new-comer. In the face of this crisis, Rebbe Lemech became greatly alarmed; he therefore convoked a meeting of the few supporters, who still remained faithful to him. And after several proposals had been made, the following one, advanced by Rebbe Lemech himself, was adopted by the acclamation of all present. It was simply this: that Rebbe Dotz should be asked whether he would agree to accept two thousand roubles in bank-notes as a present, under the condition that he should leave "Fools' Hill" that very night, and settle somewhere else. This proposal met with the approval of the other party, and in the dead of the night, unknown to any outsider, Rebbe Dotz left the town, in the carriage which Rebbe Lemech obligingly lent him for the journey.

A short time after, the local police were informed by one of Rebbe Lemech's servants that a burglary had been committed at his master's stables. A man of bad character, he said, who was known to be a professional forger, it was believed, had broken in during the night, and

had driven off in a carriage and pair of horses just a few hours before. Thereupon a number of mounted policemen at once started in pursuit, and soon secured the supposed criminal. On searching his pockets, they found the forged bank-notes, which had been given to him as a present by Rebbe Lemech's order. In vain did Rebbe Dotz protest his innocence. He was brought back to "Fools' Hill," and thrown into prison, where he was kept as a great criminal and badly treated by the officials. In consequence of this, he fell ill and died, and was buried in the local Jewish cemetery.

To celebrate his rival's death, which left him alone in his glory, Rebbe Lemech invited all his old and new devotees to a banquet. But when the revelry was at its height, a man, with a long, white beard, rushed into the dining hall, dragging a female after him. This, he said to Rebbe Lemech, was his daughter, who was possessed of an evil spirit, namely, the soul of the late Rebbe Dotz, and he had come to him to exorcise it. At the same moment, the woman began to shout out that Rebbe Lemech was the cause of Rebbe Dotz's death, that he himself was a swindler and forger of bank-notes, which he counterfeited in his secluded study, while he pretended that he was engaged in fighting

with Satan and the other angels of destruction.

At this awful and unexpected revelation, Rebbe Lemech was overcome with fear and remorse, and, falling into a swoon, was struck with paralysis. He lost the power of speech, and spent the rest of his life in great pain and misery. The supposed old man and daughter were actually two of the chief supporters of the late Rebbe Dotz, who disguised themselves as they did, in order to make these disclosures more overwhelming. They thus partly revenged the death of the innocent Rebbe Dotz, who had always been a true and devoted friend to them.

THE HEBREW POET.

BY AN ANONYMOUS HEBREW SATIRIST.

ONE fine, bright day in May I was rambling about the country, enjoying the beautiful and varied aspects of nature. In the afternoon, when the heat of the sun had become excessive, I sat down on a little hill bordering on a large forest of trees, where I was soon lulled to a pleasant sleep by the sweet songs of the birds that nestled in the branches. Suddenly, however, I was

awakened by the shrill voice of some invisible person, who seemed to be reciting poetry. On descending the hill to ascertain who it was, I saw a curious-looking little man, sitting at the foot and reciting verses from a small volume that he held in his hand. When I came near him, he greeted me in a friendly manner, and told me that he was a Hebrew poet, and the author of a volume of verses, some extracts from which he was just reading aloud for his own amusement. This volume, he added, had a sad history of its own, which, he said, he would be pleased to tell me, if I cared to hear it; and without waiting for my reply, he at once began, as follows :—

“From my very birth I seem to have been destined by fate to be an unlucky creature. Having gone through all the illnesses which little children are mostly subject to, my early education was in consequence sadly neglected, and my instruction consisted chiefly of Hebrew lessons. These were given to me by a private teacher who, however, implanted in my heart an ever-increasing love and admiration for the poetical pieces of the Bible. Several of these I committed to memory, and they no doubt helped to develop my great faculty for the composition of Hebrew verse. This I composed very freely, and is, in my opinion, of high excellence. But here fate

was again adverse to me. For, when I had succeeded in finding a paper to publish my poetry, people found fault either with its contents or its form.

“ My latest and most grievous disappointment, however, was this. I always had the ambition of having a collection of my verses printed in book form, by which means I hoped to gain both fame and wealth, but I was too poor to undertake the publication on my own account. Imagine my delight then, when, one day, an illiterate, but rich man came to me, and offered to have my poems published, on the one condition that I should dedicate the volume to him, as he wanted his name to be perpetuated thereby. I naturally consented to his proposal, and after the lapse of a short time, I had the great satisfaction of seeing my volume of poems published in a handsome cover. Thus, for a little while, I was happy in the consciousness that I was an author of a printed collection of poems which, I fully believed, would be largely bought and widely read. This illusion, however, soon vanished, when a few weeks later I learnt that only one copy had been disposed of, and that this was presented gratis to a reviewer who had applied for it. But he, thankless creature that he was, did not praise my work in his review,

but gave it such a slating as to damn it for ever."

When he had finished his tale of woe, I offered to buy a copy of his book, which offer he gratefully accepted. I then went on my way, having brought a little joy to his depressed heart.

The author of the following satirical little poem was the late Simon Bucher, who lived and died not long ago at Buda-Pest, Hungaria.

TIRZA.

WHEN a bouquet of flowers
To Tirza I brought,
With a glance of her eyes
She thanked me, I thought.

But soon as she opened
Her sweet lips to speak,
I saw she was toothless,
So, fled with a shriek.

A GRIEVOUS DISAPPOINTMENT.

BY M. SCHEIKEWITZ.

SIMON GARLIC was a greengrocer in a small way of business in a Russian hamlet. Misfortune, however, in the loss of his wife and his credit, pursued him, and he determined to convert his entire stock-in-trade into cash, and to start life again in the New World.

He took with him his only child, a bright little girl, named Hulda, and opened his business again in New York. After a time, success began to attend his efforts. He sent ship-loads of potatoes to foreign markets, whence he derived large profits, so much so, in fact, that, after some years, he won for himself the title of "the potato king." In the meantime, he gave his daughter a magnificent education, hoping that she would thus be fitted to be the wife of a rich and intellectual man.

She herself, in spite of her many accomplishments, could not help feeling at times the indignity of possessing such an odious name as "Garlic," and looked forward to marriage as a convenient means of getting rid of it for ever. On her seventeenth birthday her father gave a ball, to which he invited all the eligible young men of his

acquaintance. But, curiously enough, their names were also derived from the vegetable world. Thus, there was Reuben Horseradish, Lazarus Leek, Naphtali Sauerkraut, and Saul Carrot, himself the possessor of brilliant red hair.

As one introduction followed another, Hulda's heart sank, and she could scarcely restrain her tears. On the following day, when her father asked her whether she cared for any of the sons of his friends whom he had introduced to her the previous evening, she said she saw no advantage in adopting another vegetable for her surname, and sooner than do so would remain single all her life.

A few days later, Hulda went to an entertainment, where a young Hebrew, George Washington by name, recited some of his own lyrical effusions. To Hulda it seemed as though they were addressed specially to her, and she was correspondingly greatly elated. An introduction followed, and before long they were engaged.

Her father was at first opposed to the engagement, on the ground of the bridegroom's poverty, but at his daughter's earnest request, finally gave in. The one stipulation he made was, that the engagement should be solemnised in strict accordance with certain rites observed and acted upon in his native country. The engagement contract was to be written in Hebrew, duly signed by the

parties in their Hebrew names, and attested by the synagogue officials.

To this stipulation Hulda raised no objection, and in due course the Rabbi, the intended bridegroom, and several of her and her father's friends arrived to assist at the forthcoming quasi-religious function. The document was then duly drawn up, but, when it came to the time for signing, and Washington was asked by the Rabbi by what name he used to be "called up" in synagogue, he blushed and replied "Michael Onions." Hulda, with one cry of horror, swooned away, and the assembly broke up in great confusion.

Hulda ultimately married Reuben Horseradish, but she only consented to do so under the condition that he should change his surname for a more euphonious one. He did so, and she delights now in her new name—Mrs Lincoln.

FALSE HOPES.

BY BIALICK.

IMPELLED by want, *Reb Yomtov* left his home
In search of labour o'er the world to roam ;
He wandered far till fortune to him bore
A place as teacher in Talmudic lore.

With fifty roubles as his yearly fees—
Though hard the work, his heart is now at ease ;
And to his wife he predicts the happy day,
When they both will make greengrocery pay.

Two years he laboured : then he homeward turned
With half the hundred roubles he had earned
Snug in his pockets ; but when he had come
Hard by the frontier, panic struck him dumb.
“ Your passport,” two imperious gendarmes cry—
But that he had none, he could not well deny.
“ A spy,” they say, “ and prison you must know,
Or fifty roubles, and we'll let you go.”
So, poor *Reb Yomtov*, with an aching heart,
From all his savings was compelled to part,
And to his dear ones all he gave was this—
A tearful blessing, and a hearty kiss.

THE PRIDE OF POSSESSION.

BY M. BERDASCHEVSKY.

IN the Ghetto of a small Russian town there once lived a small, inefficient person, called Tobiah. As his delicate constitution prevented him from working, his wife and only daughter had to support him as well as themselves. This they

did by selling cakes and sweets in the Ghetto market, and though their profit was rather little, they still managed to make both ends meet. Fortunately for them they had no rent to pay, as their home had been inherited by Tobiah from his father, to whom it had been bequeathed by a near relative. It would certainly be a misnomer to dignify Tobiah's abode with the appellation of a house. In reality it was nothing more than an ugly dilapidated hovel that had two little holes, through which the light of day entered, and also a big one that served as a door. Yet Tobiah was exceedingly proud of it, especially as attached to it was a small patch of grass, on which there stood a bench, where on a fine day he would sit, contemplating with no small complacency the family estate. He would not even condescend to answer the friendly greetings of his neighbour, Reb Tanchum, who was not a landed proprietor. This neglect of common courtesy on the part of Tobiah caused the former great annoyance, which he suffered patiently, as he was unable to prevent it.

Having nothing particular to do at any time, Tobiah frequently went to the "Beth Hamidrash" close by. There he not only said his prayers regularly, but also took part in the Ghetto gossip, especially when it referred to those persons who,

through their improvidence, had to sell their houses at a heavy loss. "It serves them right," he would say, "for had they lived the same exemplary life that I do, they would have escaped the catastrophe that has so justly befallen them."

At this place Tobiah met a widower, who earned his living by keeping a horse and cart, and soon managed to marry his only daughter to him. The arrangement was that his future son-in-law should live with his young wife rent-free on the family estate, and that the horse and cart should be kept on the patch of grass. In due course the marriage took place. All parties seemed to be satisfied except the poor horse, which, owing to the want of stable accommodation, had to stand or sleep in the open air after a hard day's work.

One day, however, something happened that greatly disturbed the tranquillity of Tobiah's mind. Being an illiterate man, he did not know, and never troubled to learn, the meaning of the Hebrew prayers which he read aloud every day. But, on that particular day, an itinerant preacher, who was an enthusiastic Zionist, gave a religious discourse in the "Beth Hamidrash," in which he expressed his conviction that God Almighty had at last listened to the prayers offered to Him

daily by those present that the long-looked-for Redeemer might come and lead them back to the Holy Land. At the same time the preacher admonished his hearers that they should reward him for the cheerful tidings that he had brought them, as otherwise the Redeemer might deem it expedient to delay his arrival for some time to come.

When Tobiah heard the preacher's discourse he was greatly depressed, the more so since he learnt for the first time that he himself had helped unknowingly to bring about the forthcoming redemption of his people by offering prayers to this end for so many years past. How could he emigrate and live in Palestine, he said to himself, without taking his dearly beloved estate with him? On second thoughts, however, his depression gradually diminished, and finally disappeared altogether, for he was sure that the preacher's stipulated reward would not be forthcoming. If that were so, he doubted not that the Redeemer would delay his intended coming for at least one more generation, and then he himself would be no more among the living. This reflection raised his spirits, and gave him courage to look pleasantly into the immediate future.

But his serenity of mind was not allowed to

remain undisturbed for any length of time, and it happened thus. His neighbour, Reb Tanchum, who had nursed in his heart a secret hatred against him, on account of his frequent manifestation of unfriendliness, received a letter from a firm of solicitors, telling him that a distant relative of his, who had accumulated a large fortune in the New World, had just died, and had nominated him in his will to be his sole heir and executor. Subsequently Tobiah learnt that the same man had bought an extensive piece of ground adjacent to his own, on which he intended to build a large mansion for himself and his family. This news came as a fearful shock to him. He knew perfectly well that his neighbour's big house would, when finished, seriously obstruct the light entering the two little holes that served his house as windows. Moreover, it galled him to think that he would no longer be able to snub Reb Tanchum as before, and that in the gossip of the "Beth Hamidrash" he would no longer preserve the same exalted position, which had been accorded to him ere Reb Tanchum had come into his large fortune.

It was thus an exceedingly unhappy time for Tobiah, and when he saw the walls of his neighbour's mansion growing day by day, he could neither sleep at night, nor did he enjoy any

longer sitting on the little patch of grass. Nay, he even went so far as to add to his daily prayers an original one of his own. It was that Providence might speedily send an earthquake to shatter and swallow up his neighbour's new house, while leaving his own property untouched. But, in spite of all that, Reb Tanchum's mansion was erected without any disaster whatever.

One day, there was a great stir and excitement in the "Beth Hamidrash." Next week Reb Tanchum was to give a great banquet to all the inhabitants of the Ghetto by way of a house warming. Every one, rich and poor, was invited, only Tobiah was left out. And when the festivities were in full swing, and the host and his guests were in the best of spirits, the sad news came that poor Tobiah had just died of a broken heart.

THE RICH UNCLE.

BY A. G. GENESIN.

REB CHAIKEL was one of the inhabitants of the Ghetto in a little Russian town called Zizelick. There he was born and educated, and there, too, he married at an early age a poor girl, who presented him periodically with a boy or a girl, and

was sometimes useful to him in his little grocery shop. It is but natural that Zizelick was to Reb Chaikel the dearest spot on earth, the more so since near to it there was a large farm that belonged to a rich uncle of his who lived in a splendid mansion in Odessa as an old bachelor.

Although he had never seen his uncle or his farm, he was nevertheless very proud of both, and used to talk about them to his customers. These allusions were not without advantage to him, inasmuch as his creditors did not press him to settle his outstanding accounts with them, and even trusted him with new goods before the old ones had been paid for. He had therefore good reason to be satisfied with his lot on earth, and his mind was little disturbed whenever a new offspring appeared. On these occasions, he would always think delightedly of his rich and aged uncle, who, he was sure, would not fail to leave to him and his belongings all, or at least the greater part, of his earthly possessions.

One day, there was great excitement in the household of Reb Chaikel, which soon spread to the Ghetto, too. A letter had arrived from the rich uncle's Secretary, stating that his employer intended to visit his farm, and that on his way through Zizelick he might perhaps find a few minutes' time to visit his relatives, who were

reported to be living there. At first, Reb Chaikel was greatly elated on hearing of his uncle's intended visit, especially when many of the Ghetto people congratulated him on his good luck in being given the chance of entertaining in his house a relative who was said to own at least half a million of roubles. But after a little while his joy diminished perceptibly, for he thought of the great expense which the visit would entail upon him.

In the first place, his little house and shop, he reckoned, would require whitewashing, and the furniture repairing. Then, his wife and children would want new clothes, in order to appear decently dressed when their distinguished visitor arrived. And finally, he thought that, should his uncle feel inclined to take some refreshments, it would be necessary to procure a decent tea and coffee service. Fortunately, however, for Reb Chaikel his anxiety was somewhat reduced when some dealers in the Ghetto offered to let him have on credit all the articles he required; for they had no doubt whatever that the uncle would, on his departure, present his nephew with a big cheque that would do more than merely pay the cost of his extra expenditure.

In due course the uncle drove up in a stately carriage to his relative's little house; keen

interest was displayed by a number of the Ghetto people, who, on his appearance, cheered him loudly. On the plea of urgent business, he only stayed a few minutes in the house, and after having condescended to take some refreshments, and to shake hands with his nephew and the members of his family, he drove off to his farm, telling Reb Chaikel that he would be pleased to see him some day at Odessa.

After his departure the tradespeople came to ask for their money. But all that the poor man could give them was the assurance that his uncle had invited him to come and see him at Odessa, and that he hoped he would then be able to settle all his outstanding accounts. This assurance satisfied his creditors, some of whom even advanced him a little more money to cover the expenses of his journey to Odessa. Reb Chaikel was thus obliged to start immediately, although he did so with a heavy and trembling heart.

The journey took some days, during which time he met with several unpleasant adventures which greatly upset his mind. When he at last arrived at his uncle's mansion, the butler would not admit him, on the plea that his master was particularly busy that morning. On two subsequent days he received the same reply, but he

finally succeeded in obtaining admittance to his uncle's presence by giving the butler an acceptable tip.

The uncle, however, seemed to be in a bad humour when Reb Chaikel made his appearance, and expressed his surprise at the great hurry he was in to pay him his return visit. But the poor man told his uncle that he did so out of necessity, as business was exceptionally bad, and he thought that he might obtain from him some remunerative employment on his farm. The uncle said this was impossible, but gave him a cheque for a small amount to pay for his return journey.

When Reb Chaikel arrived at Zizelick, he looked pale and worried. To his creditors, who soon flocked to his house, he said that he had found his uncle in a dying condition. He therefore strongly advised them to be patient, as he fully expected that he would be remembered in his uncle's will. Nay, he might perhaps become the owner of his uncle's farm, in which event he would be very generous to them by letting them have the produce thereof at a greatly reduced price.

A DREAM AND ITS MEANING.

BY M. FRISCHMAN.

CALIPH ABDULA slept, when lo, there came
A dream to him, which, when the dawn was near,
Fled not, but stood clear-pictured in his eye.
The manner of his dream was this: he sat
'Neath a tall tree of spreading foliage,
Which screened him from the sun's o'erwhelming
ray,

When, on a sudden, 'cross the desert broke
A wild typhoon that crashed upon the tree,
And reft it of its branches, that they lay
Shivered, and of its erstwhile leafy pride
Bared, left but the gnarled unlovely bole.
So, when he woke, he marvelled at the dream,
And bade them call his soothsayer to him,
To ravel out the portent of the dream.
"Sir," quoth the Sage, "Allah (whose name be
blessed)

Hath sent this dream to tell thee of his will—
Know, then, that even as the tempest bared
The tree of all its branches, so grim death
Shall strip the branches of thy august line!"
Wroth was the Caliph, and the mandate went
To seize the Sage, lay on an hundred stripes,

And then, to fling him in a dungeon vile,
Where he should bide until the end was come.

Then came another Sage, and he was bid
To ravel out the portent of the dream.
And he, for that he was full worldly wise,
In honeyed words bespake the Caliph thus :
“ Thou, good my lord, thou art the mighty tree ;
And therefore Allah (may his name be blessed)
Hath sent this dreamborn vision, that thereby
He may acquaint thee of his wealth of love.—
Know that his will is, that thy stem shall live
For ever and for ever, when grim death
Hath stripped the branches of thy august line ! ”

Glad was the Caliph, and the mandate went,
To dower the Sage with raiment and with gold,
And to proclaim it in the market-place
That he of all the Sages should be chief.

Thus it befell that, though the Sages twain
Put *one* interpretation on the dream,
The one got fame, the other but the lash.
So, brother, if thou canst but read aright :
'Tis not thy words, but *how* thou speakest them
That leads thee to the pleasant things of life.

A LOVER'S TRAGEDY.

BY N. PERETZ.

THE Ghetto of a little Polish town called Zabze was one day stirred to its depths by the news that the plague had broken out in certain parts of the district to which Zabze belonged, and that it had already carried off a good many people. In the panic which ensued, the leaders of the community convened a meeting of the members to discuss matters, and the Rabbi was also requested to attend. On being asked to give his views on the situation, he said that he thought that a religious revival in the Ghetto was essential, as in that way alone could the advent of the disease be averted. He therefore ordered that the synagogue should henceforth be kept open day and night for prayers, and appealed at the same time to those present to be more strict in the observation of its rites and customs. He dwelt especially on the custom by which arrangements were made by the community to provide means for uniting in holy matrimony any adult male and female orphans in the Ghetto.

The Rabbi's exhortation had the desired effect. Fanatics of all sorts began to visit the houses in the Ghetto, where they destroyed every book that

was not printed in Hebrew characters. They also distributed a large number of old wigs among those women who had hitherto refrained from wearing them. They likewise called on old Isaac, the notorious moneylender, and induced him to consent to reduce the large interest which he had been in the habit of charging his clients. Nay, they even succeeded in obtaining from him a substantial donation to the funds that were being collected for the purpose of joining the orphans in marriage.

One of the orphans was Jossy, a young man of about twenty years of age, who, having lost his parents in early youth, and being without means of subsistence, was supported by the community on a small weekly allowance, and was also granted the privilege of living rent free in the "Beth-Hamidrash." There he was expected to make himself useful in various ways, especially in keeping the place tidy, and in looking after the fires of the great old and tottering stove.

Jossy was of peculiar manners and habits, and some of those attending the "Beth-Hamidrash" frequently chaffed him on his laziness and quaint attire. But he seemingly remained indifferent to the scorn heaped upon him by his cruel tormentors, till a remark of theirs drew his particular attention. They told him, in fun, that,

being an orphan, he had now the best chance of getting married to another orphan. He must therefore make himself neat, as otherwise he might remain a bachelor for the rest of his life. This observation roused him from his usual lethargy, and the remembrance of it kept him awake all night.

Now, it so happened that, on the following morning, Jossy attended a funeral, and that, being in the cemetery, he passed the little house in which old Yokton, the gravedigger, and his only daughter, Jemima, were living. The girl had recently lost her mother, and she was in consequence commonly called the cemetery orphan. She was standing at the open window when Jossy passed by, and seeing him clad in his quaint attire, she could not help manifesting a tittering smile. Jossy was at once captivated, not only by her smile, but also by her rosy cheeks and plump little figure. He began to picture to himself the great happiness that he would enjoy if he were married to Jemima at the community's expense. In that event, he thought, he would also have an excellent chance of ultimately obtaining old Yokton's position as gravedigger, and would thus no longer be obliged to live in the "Beth-Hamidrash" to be the butt of the community. He would then, besides, find particular

pleasure in digging deep graves for his tormentors ; so deep, indeed, would he make them that it would be impossible for them to rise again at the general resurrection.

Now, in this view, Jossy was not only not afraid of the arrival of the plague, but he even looked forward to it with genuine pleasure. For he was full of hope that it would help him to marry his beloved, rosy-cheeked Jemima, and thus make him one of the happiest men in existence. Thus, for several days running he went early every morning to the chemist to ask whether there were yet any signs of the appearance of the plague. The chemist, good-naturedly, told him that there were none, and that he need have no fear on that account. But the chemist was surprised to notice that, in spite of his repeated reassuring answers, Jossy used to leave the shop with a gloomy face.

One morning, however, when Jossy paid his usual visit, he found the chemist exceedingly busy mixing drugs and filling medicine bottles. And casting a hasty glance at his visitor's face, the chemist handed to him a small packet of drugs, telling him at the same time to go to bed at once, and to call in a doctor, as he bore the unmistakable signs of the plague on his countenance. Thereupon poor Jossy staggered home to

bed, and shortly after he breathed his last. He was one of the first victims of the plague. The last words he muttered were: "Oh, my beloved Jemima!"

JOY AND SORROW.¹

REB CHAIKE was the Rabbi of a small and poor congregation in a Russian hamlet, and his salary was accordingly also insignificant. It was paid to him, or rather to his wife, monthly, but sometimes, whenever the congregational finances were at a low ebb, it was indefinitely postponed. But Reb Chaike was of a philosophical turn of mind, and when his wife informed him of the scarcity of money in the house to buy provisions with, he would good-humouredly say to her: "Well, my dear, this slight evil can easily be remedied by our adding a few more voluntary fast-days to those instituted by Biblical and Rabbinical law."

Reb Chaike belonged to the old class of Russian Rabbis, whose official duties are generally very light, and who have, therefore, much leisure to devote, partly to devotional exercises and partly

¹ This and the following short stories have been written by Hebrew authors, who preferred using a *nom de plume* as their signatures.

to the increase of their knowledge of Talmudical lore. But he did more than that. He often occupied himself with writing letters to the Rabbis of neighbouring congregations on theological questions relating to certain rites and usages of the synagogue. He retained copies of these letters, and likewise carefully preserved the answers he received. For he thought that some day he might be able to publish them in book form, under the title of "Responsa," increasing thereby the volume of similar publications existing in the domain of Rabbinical literature.

One morning, while Reb Chaïke was sitting in his study letter-writing, his wife came in weeping and in the greatest distress, and told him that, as his salary had not been paid for two consecutive months, she had no money to get any fresh provisions. But, apart from this, she added, the tradespeople had emphatically declined to let her have any more goods before her outstanding accounts had been partially settled. This news was certainly somewhat disconcerting, but soon a happy thought struck him. He comforted his wife by saying that he was thinking to gain some money by carrying out a plan which he had just conceived in his mind, and which was this: He would, he said, set out on a journey to several

provincial towns, in the synagogues of which he would deliver religious discourses, for which, he hoped, he would be handsomely paid. He would at the same time also try to obtain subscriptions in advance for the publication of his MS., and there was no doubt, he thought, that his efforts would be crowned with success. For he might thus realise a sum of money which would do more than merely pay off their debts.

His wife was quite satisfied with his suggestive plan, and at once began to make the necessary preparations. In due course, he got leave from the President of the congregation, but only under the condition that he should consent to his wife not getting more than half his salary while he was travelling about in the country. He also obtained a small loan from a wealthy member of his flock which enabled him to cover his forthcoming expenses, and he likewise succeeded in persuading Reb Yoikel, one of the beadles of the "Beth-Hamidrash," to accompany him on his travels, and make himself useful to him in various ways.

Soon after, Reb Chaïke left his home with a light heart, and arrived with his companion in a small town, in the synagogue of which he preached the one sermon he had prepared. Taking for his text a sentence, occurring in the Book of Proverbs,

Ch. x. v. 2, "Charity saves from death," he reminded his hearers of the fact that in Russia the plague periodically made its appearance, carrying off ruthlessly numerous people of all ages belonging to both sexes. It was, therefore, their duty to be always prepared for such sad emergencies, and to do their best to keep the plague away from their midst. This, he added, they could effectively do by practising charity, which, as his text said, saved people from death. But they must especially be charitable to poor Jewish authors who have not the means to publish their works. As he was one of them, he hoped that they would extend their charity to himself also, and, by their paying him their subscriptions in advance, would enable him to get his MS. printed. His book would teach them how to prolong their life in this world, and how to obtain access to the heavenly Paradise. The preacher also quoted some appropriate and attractive parables that made the whole proceedings highly successful. The same sermon he also delivered in several other congregations with the same happy result, inasmuch as he realised a nice little sum of money, consisting of the fees he had obtained for his religious discourses, and of the subscriptions to his intended book which had been paid to him in advance.

After a few weeks' absence, Reb Chaïke, accompanied by Reb Yoïkel, returned homewards. On the first night they put up at an inn, and the former, being rather tired after a long day's journey, went early to bed, and fell at once into a sound sleep. The valise, containing all his earnings, he placed under his bed. During the night he dreamed that he saw his wife standing at the door of his house, dressed in a new silk frock, and radiant with joy at the sight of his home-coming. He also fancied that she kissed him tenderly, when he gave her his purse that was clinking with the many golden coins it contained.

When he awoke in the morning, lo! and behold, his valise had disappeared! He called frantically to Reb Yoïkel, who was supposed to sleep in the next room, but no answer was returned. He then rushed downstairs, and was told by the innkeeper that his companion had, on the plea of feeling unwell, left the house in the middle of the night in order to get some fresh air. Subsequently the valise was found outside the walls of the inn, but all that it contained was a bundle of letters, forming the literary material of Reb Chaïke's forthcoming work.

A PLEASANT SURPRISE.

ARYEH KLEZMER was the precentor of a synagogue situated in a small Galician town. On Sabbath and festivals he was assisted in his duties by a small choir, composed of a few boys and a little, queer-looking man, a bachelor, named Laibush. The latter had a pleasant, sonorous voice which he displayed with great credit to himself in solos. When he had finished, he invariably looked up to the ladies' gallery for some token of approval. For, being rather conceited, he fancied that all the fair maidens in the community were secretly in love with him, and that their chief object in attending the synagogue was to hear his beautiful voice. Needless to say that, in consequence of his fancy, he was enamoured of some of them, but there was one to whom he felt specially attracted. This was Esther, the blue-eyed and golden-locked daughter of Aryeh Klezmer. For it seemed to him that she always welcomed his solos with a furtive smile which he took as a sign of her admiration of his voice as well as of his person. He had certainly the mortification of seeing now and again one fair maiden after another of the community getting engaged and married to the man of her choice,

but this he could bear with equanimity as long as his specially beloved Esther remained single.

One day, however, he was greatly shocked to learn that Esther, too, was engaged to a local tradesman, and that the wedding would shortly take place in the synagogue. He felt that it would be impossible for him to assist at the ceremony, and he therefore decided to leave the town altogether, and to go abroad.

Now, it so happened that Laibush had an uncle, well advanced in years, who lived in an Irish town, where there was a small Jewish congregation, to which he had, for a great number of years, served as minister, and he accordingly went there, hoping he might some day succeed him. He was, however, doomed to disappointment. For, when he arrived at his uncle's place, he found him in the best of health and spirits, having just married a young wife. Laibush had, therefore, to make a living by working as a glazier, and as his hair and beard were dark, and he was, moreover, clad in faded black garments, he was generally known to the non-Jewish inhabitants of the town as the Rabbi-glazier.

The uncle was naturally highly indignant at his undignified behaviour, and offered to pay his passage to America. But he remained obdurate, till a certain incident occurred which induced him

to accept his uncle's offer. A terrific storm arose one night in the town, which caused great damage, and broke many panes of glass in various places, including the principal church. Now, the pastor of this church happened to be a zealous member of the Jewish Mission Society, and, at a meeting of the Elders, he proposed that the Rabbi-glazier should be employed to repair the damage caused by the storm. Laibush did the work, and was handsomely paid for it. But to his great dismay he read, a few days after, the following in one of the local daily papers :—

“It is rumoured that the well-known local Rabbi-glazier was so greatly impressed with the beauties of the church, the windows of which he has recently restored, that he is desirous of becoming a permanent member thereof.”

This was too much for Laibush, who, without more ado, sailed for New York. Thanks to his pleasant voice he soon obtained the post of precentor to a small congregation, near the harbour. His stipend was rather small, but he had good prospects of its gradual increase, and he therefore began seriously to think of looking out for a life-companion. So he dressed himself in well-fitting clerical garments, which gave him a tolerably respectable appearance.

One fine and sunny afternoon, when Laibush

was strolling along by the harbour, a huge transatlantic steamer arrived with a great number of passengers on board. And lo! and behold, among them were Aryeh Klezmer and his daughter Esther! They were mutually delighted to see each other again, and Aryeh soon told Laibush the reason for their coming. The engagement was broken off, as the bridegroom had ruined himself by his reckless speculations in gold mines, and his object in coming to America was to find a suitable husband for his daughter and a new post for himself. Laibush readily promised his assistance, and offered to make Esther his wife there and then. To this she consented, stipulating only that he should promise to sing to her, at least once a week, some of his beautiful and soul-elevating solos.

BEREL AND SHMEREL.

BEREL was the son of poor Jewish parents living in a small town in Russia. He received his early education at a private school, where he was chiefly taught Hebrew in its various branches. Being very fond of this language, he studied it with great zest, and ultimately acquired the faculty of being able to write and speak it with great

fluency. Owing to his delicate constitution, his father did not have him taught any trade, but was rather in favour of his studying Jewish theology, which, he hoped, might some day lead him to the position of a Rabbi. So, Berel worked away at his Hebrew and Talmudic, and supported himself by giving private lessons in these branches of learning.

Among his fellow-students was one, named Shmerel, to whom Berel was greatly attached, not only because he was, like himself, well versed in Hebrew lore, but also because of his humorous disposition. These qualities he seemed to have inherited from his father, who lived on the fees he got for reading prayers for the souls of departed dwellers in the Ghetto. He sometimes remarked that he thought that he was one of God's special favourites. "When my friend Isaac, the cobbler," he would say, "gives me a small coin as a fee for reading prayers in memory of his departed mother-in-law, I presume that he himself got it from some neighbouring farmer whose boots he had mended. The farmer himself got it from Shmule, the factor, who had bought his crop, when it was still unripe. Now, this crop ultimately became valuable, thanks to plentiful rain and sunshine, which were both sent by God's favour. By this process," said Shmerel's father in con-

clusion, "I myself have been indirectly benefited."

Shmerel was fond of writing Hebrew poems of a satirical turn. One, for instance, was about a shabby old wig worn by the Rabbi's wife, the chief merit of which was that it helped her to conceal a great part of her unlovely face. In another poem he referred to the Rabbi's haughty, but elderly daughter. He compared her to an artificial flower which, in spite of its dazzling colour, failed to attract even the most insignificant insect in existence.

One day, an incident happened which ended Berel's and Shmerel's studies. On the Sabbath preceding the Day of Atonement, the Rabbi delivered a sermon in the synagogue in which he admonished his hearers to refrain from all transgressions of the Law. A common one was to read certain authors' Hebrew translations, like Shakespeare, Voltaire, and Heine, who were known to have been most sceptical in their religious views. The perusal of such corrupting works was damnable, and ought, therefore, not to be practised by anyone who was really pious and God-fearing.

Berel and Shmerel happened to be among the audience, and on leaving the synagogue the latter remarked to his friend, with a twinkle in his eye, that he thought the Rabbi was a great hypocrite.

For there was no doubt that he himself must have read the very books he censured, and yet he strictly forbade them to do likewise. Naturally enough, they read the books for themselves, and ultimately removed to the Russian capital. There they entered upon a journalistic career, and published a weekly Hebrew paper which they called "*Thunder and Lightning*." This was partly of a literary, and partly of a political nature. Shmerel wrote the literary articles, containing, among other things, fanciful biographies of persons mentioned in the Bible, such as Og, King of Bashan, or Rahab the harlot, in which several diverting episodes were described with as much minuteness as if they had actually occurred.

Berel, on his part, wrote the political articles, but, not knowing much of politics generally, he filled his columns with descriptions of the cruel treatment which millions of Jews received at the hand of a government which, for obvious reasons, he called the Chinese. He referred to a supposed secret alliance between the Emperor of China and "The Black Hundred," who had planned and perpetrated many so-called "pogroms" in various parts of the Chinese Empire. Berel, of course, thought that, since his articles were written in Hebrew, their contents would remain unknown to the Russian authorities. But herein he was

greatly mistaken. For, after a few numbers of the "*Thunder and Lightning*" had been issued, an agent of the Secret Russian police appeared in its office and put a seal on the printing press. He, at the same time, ordered the two editors to leave the country within the next twenty-four hours, if they wished to escape a voyage to Siberia.

They naturally preferred emigration to imprisonment, and consequently they went to live in Paris. There they suffered many hardships, but acquired an extensive knowledge of the French language and literature. They ultimately succeeded in being appointed on the staff of a leading Paris paper, and the most popular of its articles are those that bear the signatures of Berel and Shmerel.

A CURIOUS MS.

SHABSY, a somewhat stupid-looking youth, was the son of a humble tradesman, who, as a Russian emigrant, had settled in an English town, where there was a small orthodox Jewish congregation. There he lived as a widower for a number of years, and in his old age his particular wish was that, when he would be no more, Shabsy should

be as strictly religious as he himself had always been. To effect his object, he had his will drawn up, and appointed his son to be his sole heir and executor, but appended the following conditions. He must prepare himself for the Jewish ministry, and must also, after having obtained a post, promulgate among his flock the principles of orthodox Judaism.

When, after his father's demise, Shabsy learnt the contents of the will, he was by no means displeased, for he thought he would find it very easy to carry out its provisions. He had, however, to dismiss the idea of leaving his native town, and of pursuing his theological studies elsewhere, as the means at his disposal would not permit of it. He therefore decided to study privately at home, and to avail himself occasionally of the help of the Rev. Mr Samach, the local Jewish minister.

Mr Samach, a native of Russia, was a funny little man, and had always a sardonic smile on his countenance. In his younger days he had studied in Berlin, and was full of ambition, hoping that he might at some future time succeed in occupying a prominent position in the Jewish ministry, when he would do his best to push forward the modern reform movement in Jewish religious matters. Being always interested in

ancient manuscripts relating to Biblical subjects, he was quite excited when, one day, he happened to read a German translation of the well-known Deluge Tablets, discovered in the latter half of the nineteenth century, by the late Mr Smith, the eminent Oriental scholar. "Oh," he said to himself, "these Tablets confirm my own theory in regard to some stories of the Hebrew Bible, namely, that their origin can be traced back to the still more ancient Babylonian literature.

But a sudden stop was placed upon Samach's theological studies by the following, somewhat romantic incident. He dined, one day, at a small Jewish restaurant, and happened to sit near an extremely pretty girl, being the daughter of a poor Jewish emigrant from Russia who was on the point of going to settle in the same town in England where Shabsy lived, and where some relatives of his resided. Samach was at once greatly enamoured of the fair maiden, forgetting for a moment the Deluge Tablets and all the other manuscripts he had read with such great interest in the Berlin Museum. Presently he declared his ardent love for her, and was soon after accepted by her as her future husband. He naturally followed her and her father to their destination, where his marriage took place. Not long after, he obtained, thanks to his extensive

knowledge of Hebrew lore, the post of Jewish minister, which happened to become vacant there.

What irony of Fate! He, who entertained the most radical views concerning certain rites and customs of the synagogue, was now obliged, not only to observe them himself, but also to recommend them to the members of his flock. He, however, looked upon the whole matter with the eye of a laughing philosopher, and managed to hide his hypocrisy as well as some of his colleagues were in the habit of doing.

One morning, when Mr Samach was in one of his humorous moods, he was visited by Shabsy, who introduced himself as a would-be student, and asked him at the same time what books he would recommend. Mr Samach glanced at the stupid face of his visitor, and thought he would have some fun with him. He therefore advised him to read as many manuscripts as he could get hold of on ancient Jewish theology.

When Shabsy returned to his lodgings, his landlady told him that she had just heard that an Oriental-looking man who had lodged for some time with her neighbour, Sarah Gramp, was, on leaving, unable to pay his bill, and that she had accepted, instead of payment, some curious thing. It was a bundle of old and well-fingered MSS., which the man had declared to

be of great value, as they dealt with matters referring to ancient Jewish theology. Shabsy was naturally delighted with the unexpected news, and rushed to see Sarah Gramp, who was a middle-aged, sour-tempered widow. When he asked her to let him have a look at the MSS., she said she would only allow him to do so if he bought them from her, and paid her in advance what she asked for them. But, as he could only offer a small sum, he had to forego the pleasure of seeing them. He, several times, repeated his visit to the widow, but although he increased his offer every time by a trifle, she remained as obdurate as before. At last a happy thought struck him, which he decided to carry into effect at once. He dressed himself in his best clothes, and on seeing again Sarah Gramp, declared that he was far less anxious to be the owner of the MSS. than of her lovely self. In short, he said he wanted her to marry him, and to become his future partner in life. It did not take long before she consented, especially as she had abandoned the hope of ever being asked in marriage by a suitor who was much younger than herself.

After the wedding, Shabsy got his wife's permission to have a good look at the MSS., but as he was too stupid to make out their meaning, he

brought them to Mr Samach. He glanced at them for a moment, and soon burst out laughing. For he found them to be only a collection of credentials, testifying to the noble character and the great abilities of their previous owner, the mysterious man from the East, who had left them with Sarah Gramp in payment of his bill. He also expressed his opinion that these credentials must be spurious.

A "PURIM" PLAY.

IN the Ghetto of a Russian hamlet there lived two men in humble circumstances, who were, nevertheless, as well known in the community as if they had been people of some importance. One of them, Davidle by name, was an old bachelor, and a cobbler by profession, while the other, called Karpel  , was a married man with a large family of children, who made a scanty living by selling "Kosher" milk, which he himself brought to the houses of his customers.

One of the chief characteristics of Davidle was this. He was not only able to prolong the life of old and moribund boots and shoes, but he could also extemporise rhymed prose in jargon that was sparkling with light satire which he

exhibited on various occasions, and more especially at wedding dinners.

There he would, for instance, tell a little tale of a nameless old lady who had sent him twice in one week a pair of tattered old shoes for mending, and who refused to pay his little bill, on the plea that the patches did not stick. Or, he would make the beadle of the synagogue the butt of his satire, by admonishing him not to indulge in the strong drinks placed on the festive table, as otherwise he would make his red nose redder still. By such and similar satirical remarks, Davidle kept the festive guests in good temper, and his services were, in consequence, constantly sought after, so much so, that no wedding dinner was considered complete without him.

As for Karpelé, his distinction lay in the possession of a powerful voice, which procured him the post of the "Ghetto-Crier." As such, he would now and again announce all the news that might be of some interest to his neighbours, as, for instance, that the Rabbi had got an increase in his family, or that there was meat to be had at the butcher's which was as fat as the best pork. Or, again, he would tell them the exact hour and minute when the forthcoming fast was to begin and end, so that they might be able to act strictly according to law and custom.

One morning, just a fortnight before the advent of the festival of Purim, Karpel  announced that, on the coming Purim night, a short theatrical piece, composed by Davidle, and entitled "Esther," would be performed in the dressing-room attached to the public bath, and that the price of admission would be very trifling. This created quite a stir, and early on the great evening a large crowd flocked to the dressing-room. A small part of this was set aside for a stage, which was divided from the audience by a large coloured blanket that hung down from the ceiling. In one corner of the room, near the stage, sat three little men who formed the band. One played the flute, another blew the cornet, while the third assisted his colleagues by beating an old and disused big drum.

While the band was playing an introductory piece of music, programmes written in jargon, were distributed among the spectators, which set forth the names of the actors in the play. It contained the information that old Isaac, the communal grave-digger, would represent King Ahasuerus, while Davidle and Karpel  would play respectively the parts of Mordecai and Haman. In a note it was stated that, since at the last moment Karpel 's wife, in spite of his earnest entreaties, had refused to act as Queen

Esther, her part had been allotted to the beadle of the synagogue, who had promised to hide his little red beard as much as possible.

Presently the curtain rose, and old Isaac was seen sitting in a tottering old armchair. He was arrayed in the white surplice which he always wore on the Day of Atonement, with a large crown on his head, made of gilt paper. Near him stood Karpelé, representing Haman, clad in an old coloured dressing-gown, with a white night-cap on his head which was ornamented with a row of glittering brass buttons. He made a speech in jargon, asking the King to issue a decree ordering all the Jews living in his dominions to be mercilessly put to death. In accordance with some passages found in the Book of Esther, he told the King that they had many foibles and faults which marked them as undesirables, who ought to be got rid of as speedily as possible.

When the King nodded assent, Karpelé, as the representative of the old Jew-hater, pretended to be greatly pleased with the achievement of his evil design, and rubbed his hands with much delight. This process enraged some of the spectators to such an extent, that they pelted him with a heap of orange-peel, which forced him to let the curtain fall.

Thereupon followed a short pause, during which the band played a funeral march, to indicate thereby Haman's expected future doom. When the curtain rose again, Davidle, as Mordecai, was seen conversing with Haman. He wore a long black coat, and a cap to match, and seemed to be in excellent spirits. For, having saved the King's life, the latter bestowed several distinctions upon him, ordering Haman at the same time that he should bring Mordecai on horseback through the streets of the city, and proclaim before him: "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the King delights to honour." Davidle also made use of some remarks found in some ancient Rabbinical writings concerning additional orders given by Mordecai to Haman, his proud and aristocratic enemy. Thus Davidle told Karpelé that he must at once prepare a warm bath for him, and likewise trim his beard and locks. He also ordered him to do some other serville work in connection with the King's command, which caustic observations provoked much merriment and laughter from the spectators. Amidst this general hilarity the curtain fell.

In the next and final scene of the piece, Karpelé, as Haman, was seen kneeling near an old couch, and declaring his passion for Queen Esther. Her part, as already stated, was played

by the beadle of the synagogue, wearing his wife's best gown and all her sham jewellery. But, having unfortunately forgotten all he had learnt to say on the occasion, and being, moreover, unable to hide his little red beard, he only grinned and grinned again, to the great amusement of all spectators. One of them, a little mischievous boy, became so excited that he threw his cap at his head, but, missing him, it hit the solitary oil-lamp on the stage. It fell down with a great crash, plunging the stage in darkness.

Thereupon loud calls summoned Davidle, the only favourite among the four actors, to appear in front of the curtain. He did so, and, with a smiling face, he thanked the audience for their kind patronage, and apologised at the same time for the few mishaps that had occurred during the performance. But, in spite of that, he said, all the actors were in good humour, and they intended to spend the rest of the evening pleasantly in the little house of old Isaac, which was adjacent to the inner wall of the cemetery. There, he hoped, they would not be disturbed in their merry-making in the night of Purim, that comes but once in the year.

LOST AND FOUND.

YANKE was a dark-haired little man, who lived as an elderly bachelor in the Ghetto of a small Russian town, where he made a scanty living by mending old clothes. Among his regular customers were several poor students of Jewish theology, with whom he was a great favourite. For, though poor himself, he not only never pressed them to settle their accounts, but even went so far as to advance them, without security, small sums of money, whenever they were hard up, and he was able to do so.

These students had regularly once a year, on Purim night, a convivial gathering in the Beth-Hamidrash, to which, as a mark of gratitude, Yanke was invited. On these festive occasions he took part in their singing of Hebrew melodies, and proved himself the possessor of an extremely pleasant voice. Some of his auditors even remarked that, if he ever had the chance of conducting the service in the synagogue, he would certainly delight the congregants by his performance. Curiously enough, he got the chance soon after. For it so happened that the warden of the synagogue heard of Yanke's talent, and asked him to officiate one Sabbath morning,

on the sudden illness of the regular precentor. Yanke felt highly honoured by this invitation, and read the prayers most impressively. His reading was especially admired by the beadle, who, at the close of the service, invited him to supper.

This unexpected hospitality filled Yanke's heart with the greatest joy imaginable. He had always a secret admiration for Tamar, the beadle's only daughter, who was one of the fairest maidens living in the Ghetto. He was thus to have, for the first time, the good fortune to be near her, and, perhaps, to be able to let her know of his secret passion. If she were to consent to become his wife, he would, he thought, try to become a regular and fashionable tailor, and as such, would be in a position to offer her a pleasant and happy home.

There was, however, one little thing that greatly disturbed him. His best suit of clothes being of his own make, he remembered, fitted him very badly, and he had no time to get another. This was certainly an evil, but he thought it would be a greater evil still if he were to cancel his visit, and thus miss the rare chance of meeting Tamar in her own home. He therefore decided to keep his appointment by all means. And, indeed, when he appeared

in the house of his host, he presented a most grotesque figure. The latter received him kindly enough, but Tamar could hardly suppress a titter. This did not escape Yanke's notice, and it deprived him of his courage to enter into conversation with her. He, therefore, cut his visit short, and went home very despondent. Soon after, he made up his mind to leave the place altogether, and to emigrate to the New World.

On his arrival in New York he passed by chance a tailor's shop, the owner of which happened to be a townsman of his, who, several years before, had emigrated to America to try his luck there, and had been, indeed, most successful in the tailoring business. He received Yanke most warmly, and at once gave him some employment in his shop, and likewise afforded him every facility to become an expert in the art of fashionable tailoring. Thus, in twelve months' time, he was able to put by a small sum of money, and also to make for himself a new suit of clothes that was quite faultless in the way of shape and cut. But during these twelve months Yanke never ceased thinking of Tamar, who was still the queen of his heart. She was especially in his mind on the anniversary of his departure from his native town. That night he had a most pleasant dream. He dreamt he

was again in the beadle's house, clad in his new and fashionable attire, which won many glances from Tamar's beautiful eyes. He also fancied he heard her musical voice, expressing her admiration for the fine way in which he had conducted the service in the synagogue to the great satisfaction of all the members of the community. Finally, he imagined he felt the electrifying pressure of Tamar's tiny hand, indicating thereby her hidden love for him. Indeed, this delightful dream made him, for once, most happy.

When he awoke on the following morning he found a letter on his table. It was from one of the theological students whose clothes he often used to mend, and who was his most constant borrower. It said that the old precentor of the synagogue was dead, and that he was nominated by the warden as the most suitable successor. All his colleagues looked forward with pleasure to his return, and a warm welcome awaited him from the beadle of the synagogue. It is needless to say that Yanke was delighted with the unexpected news, and that, in a short time, he was home again, full of hope that his delightful dream might become an even more delightful fact.

This was really the case. For when he again

supped with the beadle, he found Tamar not only more beautiful than ever before, but also most amiable and attentive to him. He proposed and was accepted ! Among the invited guests to the wedding dinner were all the students of Jewish theology, who rejoiced at seeing their former great benefactor sitting with a radiant face near his beautiful bride. Yanke continued to advance them money, without security, whenever they were in need of it.

“THE SONG OF SONGS.”

SHMAYEH was a Russian emigrant who, having settled with his family in the East of London, earned a scanty livelihood by selling various cheap articles at the street corners. He was assisted therein by his only son Leizer, a tall, intelligent youth, whose education, however, had been sadly neglected.

On the eve of the Sabbath, as soon as supper was over, Shmayeh habitually asked Leizer to read him “The Song of Songs” in the original Hebrew from the old and well-fingered prayer-book, his only heirloom. Whenever Leizer read this beautiful lyrical song, he did so mechanically, for the simple reason that he did not understand

what he was reading. Not much better off in this respect was his father, but the reading had at least the advantage of making them drowsy and ready for an early bed. After having enjoyed a good night's rest, they were always among the first attending the little synagogue of the neighbourhood, and they both read the customary prayers out of the heirloom. This, however, eventually fell to pieces, and Shmayeh bought a new one, and gave it to Leizer on his twentieth birthday. It was a modern edition, and contained an English translation of the daily prayers, as well as of "The Song of Songs."

Now, on the next Friday night, Leizer read, in his usual way, a portion of "The Song of Songs," which speedily lulled his father to sleep. Presently, he cast a glance at the English translation of the first few introductory verses, one of which ran: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for thy love is better than wine." He mused a little, and then went on reading, till he came to—

"Behold, thou art fair, my precious love,
Thine eyes are like the eyes of a dove."

There, a strange new feeling arose in Leizer's heart. He read "The Song of Songs" through, and at the end he was suddenly captivated by the charms of the beautiful and imaginary

maiden. Then, closing the prayer-book, he retired to rest, and in his dreams he fancied the fair one of "The Song of Songs" was leaning over him, whispering in his ears: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for thy love is better than wine."

On the following morning, Leizer went, as usual, to synagogue, and took his new prayer-book with him. There he again read the English translation of "The Song of Songs," and when he came to the verse—

"Behold, thou art fair, my precious love,
Thine eyes are like the eyes of a dove,"

he chanced to look up at the ladies' gallery, and met a pair of beautiful smiling eyes that belonged, as he subsequently learnt, to Tirza, the youngest and charming daughter of the warden of the synagogue. During the rest of the service he furtively looked up again and again to the warden's daughter, who seemed to him to be the very image of his imaginary maiden. By this time, he was head over ears in love with her, but, poor boy, how could he expect ever to win her affection, as long as he was no more than a humble assistant to his father in his business. He decided, therefore, to start at once for South Africa, where several other young men of his acquaintances had gone and made their fortune.

Leizer arrived in South Africa, where he soon embarked in mining operations. For some time he could do no more than make a bare living, but amidst all his toils and troubles he never neglected to attend synagogue every Saturday morning, where he always read "The Song of Songs," which vividly recalled to his memory lovely Tirza, being thousands of miles away. At last, Fortune smiled upon him, for he, one day, bought a piece of ground which turned out to contain a large quantity of pure gold. In a comparatively short time he became a rich man, and was presently elected warden of the synagogue.

One Sabbath morning, while reading in his customary way "The Song of Songs," and coming to his favourite verse—

"Behold, thou art fair, my precious love,
Thine eyes are like the eyes of a dove,"

he suddenly saw Tirza looking down to him from the ladies' gallery. After service, her father shook hands with him, and also invited him to dine with him in his hotel, telling him at the same time that he and his daughter were on a short visit to some relatives there.

Needless to say that Leizer was punctual at the hotel at dinner time, and that he looked his best, when he was introduced to Tirza. After dinner, when he was alone with her for a little

while, he told her that he was very fond of reading "The Song of Songs," and that he specially liked the couplet—

"Behold, thou art fair, my precious love,
Thine eyes are like the eyes of a dove."

Thereupon Tirza blushed deeply, and acknowledged that she, too, often read it, and what she liked best was: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for thy love is better than wine."

On the following Saturday morning, an official announced in the synagogue that the warden was shortly to marry Tirza, the daughter of another warden, who was temporarily staying in the same town. As Leizer was, owing to his many charitable deeds, a great favourite in the community, this announcement gave much pleasure and satisfaction to all present. At the wedding ceremony, the officiating Rabbi delivered an address, taking for his text a verse found in "The Song of Songs": "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."

POVERTY AND WEALTH.

SHMULKE was one of a little group of Jewish theological students who regularly attended the Talmudical classes conducted by a Rabbi of a

small Jewish community. Losing his parents at an early age, he was adopted by an uncle who, though poor himself, did all he could to promote the welfare of his body and mind. He had him educated in Hebrew lore and in secular subjects, so that, in course of time, he was able to gain for himself a scanty livelihood by giving private lessons in Hebrew and Talmudic. Not till then did Shmulke's uncle carry out his long-formed plan of emigrating to America, where, he hoped, he would some day make his fortune.

Although Shmulke was a great favourite with the Rabbi, on account of his cleverness and industry, he was not much liked by other people, chiefly because of his peculiarities. He had the habit of thinking aloud, and this often offended people he met. If he saw, for instance, a man with a nose which resembled an eagle's beak, he would say audibly that it would make an excellent "Shofar" to be used in the synagogue on New Year's Day. Or, if an ugly girl passed him in the street, he would sigh and loudly remark that her face was a good enough reason for the Redeemer postponing his advent indefinitely. He had always had a particular liking for mystical allusions found in the Bible in reference to the advent of the Redeemer, and the Book of Daniel had a particular attraction for him. There, he

fancied, he had discovered certain words and expressions which indicated the certain appearance of the Redeemer within his own time. What wonder, then, that the sceptics in the community regarded him as a harmless lunatic.

But Shmulke was not altogether mad, for there was some reason in his madness. With the arrival of the Redeemer, he thought, his own prospects would at once improve. The study of Hebrew, which was the national language of the Jewish race, and of which he was master, would then become more popular, and he would thus obtain an increase in the number of his private pupils. Nay, he even hoped that some day he might be appointed Professor of Hebrew at one of the universities which, on the Redeemer's suggestion, would be founded in Palestine, the regenerated Jewish State. Thus established, he would be able to realise his long cherished hope, namely, to propose to, and be accepted by Penina, the beautiful and accomplished daughter of his teacher, the Rabbi.

While many of the Ghetto people characterised his constant talk about the approaching advent of the Redeemer as idiotic, the Rabbi listened to it with great interest and delight. For he, too, expected that the coming of the Redeemer would effect a vast improvement in his domestic affairs.

He, poor man, though he had been a great many years in office, received such a small stipend from his congregation that he could hardly make both ends meet. Fortunately for him he was of a sweet temperament, and possessed also a sense of humour, so that he looked upon his impoverished condition as a sure indication that better things were in store for him, if not on earth, then in heaven.

He was once asked by the President of his congregation what ordinance of the Jewish law he considered to be the best. His reply was that he found the institution of several *fast-days* in the year most practical for himself, as their observance prevented him and his wife from running into debt. On another occasion, a well-to-do member of his flock asked him to dine with him. The Rabbi sent word to him to say that he would do so with pleasure, provided that his wife had finished mending his only decent coat. In his sermons, too, he sometimes referred cunningly to his lack of money, and once he ridiculed the habit of some members of his flock who frequently sent alms to poor Jews in Jerusalem, while omitting to assist their own poor, to whom, unhappily, he himself belonged. But all these hints were like voices raised in the wilderness, for they had no effect, and his stipend con-

tinued to be as small and unsatisfactory as before.

The Rabbi would certainly have borne his lot patiently, had he not been so anxious about the future of his only daughter. He wanted her to be settled in life, but failed to see the possibility of her ever getting married, unless he could give her a dowry and the necessary outfit. One morning, Shmulke rushed into the Rabbi's study, and told him in a few hasty words that, while reading the Book of Daniel the previous night, he had found some words which surely indicated the Redeemer's appearance in their midst within the next few days. But the Rabbi smiled, and said that his visitor's hope had, in some sense, been realised already. He showed him a letter he had just received from a firm of American solicitors, which said that Shmulke's uncle had recently died in California, leaving a large sum of money, which, according to his will, was to be divided between his only nephew and his teacher, the Rabbi.

While they were cordially shaking hands, the Rabbi's wife entered the study, and informed her husband that he, Penina, and herself had just been invited to a wedding dinner. She likewise told him that he ought not to decline the invitation, as she had finished the patchwork on his coat

which did not look now half as bad as before. Presently Penina came in, and told her father, with tears in her eyes, that she would not be able to go to the wedding party, for the simple reason that her best dress was too shabby. Imagine thus the mother's and daughter's joy and delight when they heard the news! Shmulke looked with rapture on the lovely girl who had often been the object of his dreams, and who, through her excitement, was now quite a picture of a rare beauty. He asked her timidly whether she would let him present her with the new dress. Penina looked at him blushing, and said she would do so with much pleasure.

At the wedding, to which Shmulke was also invited, it was announced, amidst great applause, that the next wedding at the Ghetto would be that of Shmulke and the Rabbi's daughter.

UNPLEASANT SURPRISES.

REB ZERACH and Reb Terach were two important personages in a community of strict observers of all Rabbinical laws and regulations. The former was President of the community, while the latter held the honorary post of Chairman of the local

Burial Society. They obtained their respective positions, not only because they were well-to-do and charitable people, but also because they led, or pretended to lead, a strictly religious life. They certainly did not get any direct payment for their services, but indirectly they derived some moral and pecuniary advantages from the posts they held. In the first place, they were looked up to by the Ghetto people as men of importance, considering that they, together with the Rabbi, acted as their spiritual leaders. And, then, some individuals entrusted them with their savings, which they were able to employ profitably in their own business.

As the Rabbi had neither time nor inclination personally to look after the religious welfare of the community, his duties were performed by the President and the Chairman of the Burial Society. Thus, if any poor inhabitant of the Ghetto was reported to have transgressed any usages of the synagogue, they put a black mark against his name in the archives of the community, which disentitled him from claiming or receiving any assistance from the poor box, unless he promised future amendment in his religious observances.

Once it so happened that, during one of the most severe winter months, a light epidemic broke out among the infantile population. At first no

particular notice was taken of it by the leaders of the community, but when they heard that the Rabbi's twins and the beadle's triplets were also ill, they thought it was time to act. Accordingly, after consultation with the Rabbi, they decided that the following day should be observed as a *fast* by all the members of the community, and that, up to midday, prayers should be offered in the synagogue, which might help to restore the poor suffering infants to their usual health.

In the afternoon of the following day, when all the shops of the Ghetto were closed in consequence of the *fast*, and their owners were seen outside haggard and pale, Reb Terach went to see the President, with whom he wanted to confer on some urgent communal business. On arriving at the house, he was told by the servant that her master was in his study. Thereupon Reb Terach went up, and after having gently knocked at the door, he entered the study. But lo! and behold, the Chairman was sitting in a comfortable arm-chair, indulging in some light refreshments in the shape of wine and cakes. Reb Terach was horrified at this unexpected sight, for he would never have thought it possible that the very man who had imposed a fast on a multitude of people should himself break it so shamelessly in secret. Presently Reb Zerach

sprang up from his seat, and considering for a moment the moral ruin that would fall upon him if his visitor were to disclose his hypocrisy to the neighbours, he rushed to the door, locked it and put the key into his pocket. He then imperatively insisted on his colleague also taking some refreshments. At first, Reb Terach refused to touch anything, and looked rather glum, but gradually he began to grin, and finally emptied a large glass of wine, which he declared to be most excellent, and especially acceptable on a long fast-day.

Some time after, these two spiritual leaders of the community were informed that one Sabbath morning, before the service had begun in the synagogue, the burning oil lamp that hung in front of the Ark had fallen down, and further that, when the oil caught fire, the "Kosher" butcher rushed forward and put it out with his thick boots. This act, the informer thought, was an open desecration of the Sabbath, the perpetrator of which ought to be severely punished. Thereupon Reb Terach at once suggested to his colleague that the butcher's licence to sell "Kosher" meat should be cancelled, and that the usual black mark should be put against his name. The President, on the other hand, was of the opinion that the butcher deserved the thanks of

the community, inasmuch as by his promptitude and courage he averted a possible conflagration of the sacred building. There the matter rested.

One day, an itinerant preacher arrived in the Ghetto, and was, according to the usual custom, asked to give on Saturday morning a religious discourse in the synagogue. The preacher took as his theme "Sabbath Observance," and said that, although he had for more than thirty years constantly taken the same subject for discussion, he was grieved to see the meagre results of his preaching. Nay, he was horrified to hear that in the very sacred place in which he was standing a butcher had recently desecrated the Sabbath by touching and putting out with his boots the fire, caused by the "perpetual lamp" falling down from the ceiling, and that he was still allowed to supply the community with "Kosher" meat.

In conclusion, he expressed the hope that the day would soon come when his efforts towards the promotion of Sabbath observance would be crowned with success, and would also be more handsomely rewarded than they had ever been before. At the close of the service, Reb Terach thanked the preacher most heartily for his excellent sermon, which, he said, would no doubt always be remembered by the members of the community, and thus prevent them from commit-

ting the sin of lighting or extinguishing any fire on the sacred Sabbath day.

Now, it so happened that on the same afternoon Reb Zerach went to pay a visit to his colleague, and on opening the door of his study, he was both astonished and amused to see him with a burning match in his hand, in the very act of lighting a cigar! Reb Terach was terror-stricken when he saw who his visitor was. A moment after, remembering what had recently happened in the President's house in connection with the fast-day, he locked the door, and pocketed the key. He then insisted on his colleague smoking also one of his cigars, by which act, he said, he would be prevented from denouncing him as a sham and hypocrite. The President laughed good-humouredly, and asked the favour to be allowed to smoke his own cigar, which he had with him. It was, he said, of a particular brand, which he preferred to any other one.

TWO GHETTO IDIOTS.

IN the Ghetto, persons are sometimes to be found who, from peculiarities in their walk, or talk, or manners, are good-humouredly dubbed by

their neighbours the idiots. To this class of idiots belonged the twin-brothers, Simcha and Suson, who were old bachelors, and were often to be seen walking and talking loudly together. Simcha had a squint in one of his eyes, and seemed to have a perpetual smile on his face, while his brother wore a pair of large blue spectacles, through which he looked upon his surroundings with the glance of a laughing philosopher. In early youth they had become orphans, and what they chiefly inherited from their father were a few old prayer-books and a fair number of unpaid bills. But it was a piece of good luck to them that, shortly after the death of their parents, a childless relative died also, leaving them a legacy that insured them a small income for life.

As they had nothing particular to do, they spent the greater part of the day in the Town Library, and while Simcha chiefly read theological books, his brother was very fond of works on ethics and philosophy. While walking homewards through the narrow streets of the Ghetto, they always loudly discussed what they had just been reading. Simcha spoke of religions generally, comparing them with his own, and his brother mentioned what he had jotted down regarding the influence exercised on modern Judaism by Kant's philosophy

The urchins of the Ghetto used to greet their appearance with cries of "Here come the idiots!"

But, as a matter of fact, Simcha and Suson were by no means idiots, for, apart from their eccentricities, they were men of sound sense. As such they would sometimes attend communal meetings, and would criticise good-humouredly such resolutions as appeared to them open to objection. So, for instance, it once happened that the man who blew the *Shophar* in the synagogue on New Year's Day lost his breath, and was thus unable to complete the hundred blasts enjoined by Rabbinical law. In consequence of this, a meeting was held, at which the Chairman proposed that the official in question should be suspended. But Simcha said that, in his opinion, no blame ought to be attached to him for his inability to carry out so difficult a task, which, moreover was only a ridiculous old custom. The Chairman, however, characterised Simcha's remark as most idiotic, and so the resolution passed ultimately with common consent.

On another occasion, Suson attended a meeting to collect funds for the marriage of two poor and somewhat deformed orphans. His view was that the marriage could not but plunge them into the abyss of a life-long poverty and misery. But, after the Chairman had asked the speaker to stop

his nonsensical remarks, the collection took place, and the orphans were later on united in holy matrimony.

One day, the twin-brothers came across a jargon paper that appeared in the Russian capital, advocating the introduction of certain reforms among the Jews in Russia. This led them to consider the question of issuing a similar paper for the benefit of their neighbours. They therefore sent out circulars, advertising the forthcoming publication of a weekly paper in jargon, called *The Flag*, and inviting subscriptions. But the only result these circulars produced were two letters, one containing a request for a free copy, and in the other the following advertisement was to be found :—

“ A father of twin-daughters, with expectations, is desirous of marrying them to suitable persons. Twin-brothers preferred.” This advertisement they read and re-read at the cost of a sleepless night. They discussed it from every point, and in the end they came to the conclusion that it would be worth their while to woo themselves the twin-sisters, especially as they had some expectations to look forward to. This they did, and eventually made them their wives. Of course, *The Flag* never made its appearance, and the would-be editors, whose visits to the

Library were now forbidden by their wives, gave up reading theology and Kant. But what they lost in one way they won in another. For they were no longer greeted by the Ghetto urchins with the old cry of: "Here come the idiots."

THE "REBBE'S" PIPE.

CHONE had a draper's shop in a Russian hamlet, where there was a small orthodox Jewish community. Thanks to his industry and honesty, his business grew and yielded him a respectable income. As he was religiously inclined and of a charitable disposition, he was elected warden of the synagogue, of which mark of esteem and confidence he was justly proud. He had thus every reason to be happy and to be satisfied with his lot on earth, and yet there was one reason why his equanimity was sometimes disturbed. He had an only grown-up daughter of so unattractive an appearance that the only chance of her getting married was a large compensatory dowry. To procure this he would have been obliged to sell at a loss the greater part of the goods, and this, he thought, would mean ruin to his business.

One day, on discussing the matter with Todres, one of his old customers, who happened to be the

devotee of a famous neighbouring "Rebbe," Chone was strongly advised to go and see the latter. This holy man, he said, would for a small fee offer prayers on behalf of the girl, and would also bestow upon her his divine blessings, which would no doubt help her to find a husband without a large dowry being given to her. Chone found this suggestion most practical, and accordingly went to see the "Rebbe." On his arrival, he was told by an attendant that that day was the "Rebbe's" smoking day, when he always had a pleasant chat with the angel Gabriel, and on such days the "Rebbe" could only receive visitors on payment of an extra large fee. As Chone was anxious to return home to his business as quickly as possible, he paid the money, and was then admitted to the room, where the "Rebbe" was sitting in a comfortable arm-chair, smoking a long pipe. After having explained the object of his visit, he was told by the "Rebbe" that he must come again, and bring his daughter with him, as he could only pronounce his blessings on her while she was present.

Some days after, Chone brought his daughter to the "Rebbe's" home, but, to his great dismay, he was again told at the door that it was the "Rebbe's" smoking day, and that he would thus have to pay, as before, an extra large fee. As

there was no way out of it, Chone did as he was bidden, and then brought his daughter into the "Rebbe's" presence. Without looking at her he bestowed a blessing on her, but presently he furtively glanced at her face, and at once declared it to be so ugly that his blessings would have to be repeated later on, in order to be effective. He therefore asked Chone to visit him again with his daughter in about a week's time, when he would fix the day for another and final visit.

With a heavy heart Chone returned home, where he found his wife bathed in tears. She told him that during the night burglars had entered the shop, who carried off not only a large quantity of goods, but also the cash-box with all its contents. This sad news distressed him greatly, particularly as he remembered the next visit to the "Rebbe," which, he was afraid, would again happen to be on one of his "smoking" days. However, a happy thought struck him. Next day he drove to the "Rebbe's" house, and on the pretence that he had to tell him something of great importance, he was admitted into his presence, without being obliged to pay any fee at all. He then told the "Rebbe" of his serious mishap, and said he would be a ruined man if the "Rebbe" refused to grant him a small request. He wanted a present of one of his old, long pipes.

The "Rebbe" laughed heartily, and readily complied with his request.

Presently a stir arose in the Ghetto. It became known that a pipe, a precious relic of the famous "Rebbe" of the neighbourhood, was on view at Chone's shop, and that anyone paying a small fee, gets the privilege of a few puffs. Thereupon, for several days running, a large crowd flocked into the shop to smoke the very pipe which was used by the "Rebbe" when conversing with the angel Gabriel. Among those visitors was the old customer Todres, who had advised Chone to have an interview with the "Rebbe." He had lost his wife, and was on the look out for a second one. He was so much enchanted with the sight of the pipe that he felt he must have it, and told Chone that he would be prepared to marry his daughter, if the pipe were included in the small dowry which he intended to give her. Chone jumped at the offer, and the lady, too, gave her consent, so that there was, after all, some good in the "Rebbe's" blessings.

LAYZER AND PAYZER.

ONCE there lived in a certain small Russian town two old bachelors, professing the Jewish faith,

and called respectively Lazyer and Payzer. In their younger days they acquired some knowledge of Hebrew and Talmudical lore, but failed to learn any trade or profession, by which they would have gained a livelihood. It was therefore very fortunate for them that the respective posts of librarian and beadle of the "Beth-Hamidrash" became vacant, and that they were successful in getting the appointments. Layzer was elected librarian, and Payzer beadle of this house of prayers and learning, and their posts carried with them free residence and some occasional perquisites, which were sufficient to free them from worldly cares. Therefore, when late at night they retired to rest, after the doors of the Beth-Hamidrash had been closed to visitors, they slept on the hard benches more soundly and more peacefully than their great ruler, the Emperor of Russia, ever did on his luxurious couch.

Much of their leisure time was devoted to the study of the books found on the shelves of the Library. While the beadle was very fond of Hebrew grammars, the librarian had a predilection for those books that treated of symbolism and mysticism in the Jewish religion. Of course, they sometimes discussed the merits of the books which they had been reading, and on one occasion the beadle remarked to his friend that, in his

opinion, there was nothing more grand and more interesting in the whole domain of Hebrew literature than the three tenses of the Hebrew verb, namely, the past, the present, and the future. The past tense, he said, represented the past history of the world, including all the happy events that had taken place, from the days when Adam and Eve lived in the lovely Paradise, down to their own time. The present tense, he further remarked, referred certainly to one day only, which they spent happily within the walls of the Beth-Hamidrash, but how grand and sublime was the future tense! It might, perhaps, have in store for them a succession of even happier days than they enjoyed, if they each found a wife with a small deposit in the Savings Bank!

Payzer listened silently and attentively to his friend's remarks, and said that he certainly appreciated the bright prospects held out to them by the future tense of the Hebrew verb. Yet, for all that, he preferred books of symbolism and mysticism. "Look here," he said to the beadle with some animation, "these are subjects which cannot but enhance our very life and existence. Take, for instance, the grand symbol embodied in the religious custom that is well known under the name of "Tashlich." On every New Year's Day we go to the river, shake our garments, and

thus get rid of all the crumbs contained in our pockets. By this easy and simple process we are at once cleared of all the sins that we may have committed during the whole past year, and we thus baffle Satan and his whole retinue of evil spirits, that are all intent on injuring us by bringing up on the Day of Judgment all our transgressions of the past year. Now, were it not for the institution of "Tashlich," we would not be alive at this moment to enjoy the pleasant prospects that the future tense of the Hebrew verse opens to us."

This conversation took place on the morning that preceded the Jewish festival, called "The Rejoicing of the Law." During the afternoon, the cook of the Rabbi, whose house was adjacent to the Beth-Hamidrash, put through the open window two large and newly baked cakes, with two slips of paper attached, stating that they were presents to the librarian and the beadle. Finding them delicious, they consumed them completely along with their evening meal.

Soon after, they retired to rest, but for some reason or other could not sleep. Presently, the beadle asked his neighbour whether he could keep a secret. On receiving an affirmative answer, he said his secret was that he was shortly going to marry the Rabbi's cook, and gave the following particulars :—

“For several weeks past I have been going every Friday afternoon to the Rabbi’s kitchen to let the cook know when Sabbath commenced, and when it terminated. She was always very grateful for the information, and she regularly asked me to sit down and take some refreshments, which I always did. On these occasions, I used to speak to her of the grandeur of the tenses of the Hebrew verb, and especially of the future tense, which, I said, opened to both of us pleasant prospects of getting married. On my last visit to her, she told me that she had often thought of the future tense of the Hebrew verb, and likewise of all it suggested, but that she would not marry any person in the whole world, unless he was as clever and learned as I was. And after telling me that she had a little money in the Savings Bank, she said that, judging from my amorous glances, she was sure that I was in love with her, and would send me a cake to-day, in which I would find a scrap of paper mentioning the exact date she had fixed for our wedding. This,” the beadle said in conclusion, “will be to-day fortnight, and I invite you herewith to the forthcoming wedding dinner.”

Payzer was not a little amazed at the news ; for he had also had an eye on the Rabbi’s cook, and used to speak to her occasionally in the

kitchen about his love of mystical and symbolical books, at which she always sneered. With a heavy and sad heart, he congratulated the beadle on his good luck, but declined his invitation to the wedding dinner, on the plea that he had already accepted a previous engagement.

THE GHETTO MARRIAGE-BROKER.

THERE is an old Jewish proverb which says that all Jewish marriages are made in heaven, but, as a matter of fact, this is by no means the case. They are frequently arranged on the terrestrial globe, and more especially so within the precincts of the Ghetto, wherever it is still in existence. The chief factor in these matrimonial arrangements is the marriage-broker, who is commonly called in Hebrew phraseology, "Shadchan." He is, as a rule, a sharp-witted fellow, who possesses a peculiar power of persuasion, together with a keen sense of humour. By dint of these rare gifts, he sometimes succeeds in effecting marriages even among those who have already renounced the hope of ever enjoying the blessings of a married state.

Mendelé, a little man with a big head and small laughing eyes, was a typical marriage-

broker. Having practised his vocation for a great many years, his health ultimately broke down, and, in consequence, he retired into private life, living modestly on his small savings. Like so many of the fraternity, he was of a humorous temperament, and thus found pleasure in sometimes setting down in jargon the records of some of his diverting professional reminiscences. At the time when he gave up his calling, they formed a bulky MS., which he carefully preserved, thinking that it might perhaps later on be of some use to him. That this was really the case will be seen from the following incident.

Mendelé had an only unmarried daughter, who was somewhat like himself, short of stature, and by no means attractive. She, poor thing, had already resigned herself to remaining a spinster all her life, especially as she was aware of her father's inability to give her a dowry which might perhaps have tempted an impecunious candidate for marriage to ask for her hand. But much more hopeful in this respect was Mendelé, the matrimonial expert. Thus, on his retiring from his profession, he began to think seriously of his daughter's unmarried state, and of the best means of changing it.

One day, the idea struck him that Yoikelé, the Ghetto poet and wit, who had recently lost his

wife, might possibly be induced to become his son-in-law. He had, in reality, no profession whatever to boast of, but he earned a scanty living by singing humorous songs of his own composition at festivals, and more especially at wedding dinners that frequently took place in the Ghetto. He, Mendelé thought, would be the very man for a marriage-broker, the more so, if he were to have the advantage of having himself as a constant guide and adviser. Nay, he was even prepared to part with his beloved MS. and to give it to Yoikelé, or rather to his daughter, as a dowry on the day that he married her.

So, one day, Yoikelé was invited to spend an evening in Mendelé's little flat, and, on his arrival, found a sumptuous supper placed on the table, to which he did full justice. He especially praised the savoury and tasteful cakes, and when he was told by his host that they were all made and baked by his daughter's own hands, he said in Biblical phrase: "Behold from the sweet there cometh sweetness." This nice little compliment paid by Yoikelé to the daughter of the house offered her father a good opportunity to speak to him on the subject in which he was so greatly concerned. Thus, as soon as Mendelé and his guest were alone, he

suggested to the latter that he should marry his daughter, the sweetness of which he had just so gallantly praised. In that event, he added, he would not only become his successor, but would also have the benefit of his fatherly advice, and many years' experience. Nay, he was even prepared, he said, to present him with a MS. of his own, which he would find to be, from a practical point, as valuable as a small dowry. On hearing these words, Yoikelé was taken by surprise, and could not for the moment decide one way or the other. He, however, asked his host to oblige him in the meantime with an extract from his MS. To this Mendelé readily consented, and read as follows:—

“Mr Isaacs, an old friend of mine, who was the owner of a little drapery shop, was also the progenitor of seven daughters, for six of whom I did my best to find suitable husbands, but all my efforts to get one to marry the youngest one were unavailing. For she, poor soul, was so ugly that no candidate cared to see her more than once. At last, I found some individual who, I thought, might perhaps feel inclined to marry her. He was an aged widower, and when I spoke to him on the matter, he said that he would be prepared to marry my friend's daughter if he got two hundred florins as a

dowry, which was to be handed over to him on the morning of the wedding day. Mr Isaacs agreed to do so, especially when I told him that his intended son-in-law was a clever business man, and would, one day, most probably become one of the merchant princes in the land.

“ Thereupon all the preparations for the forthcoming wedding were duly made, and when everything was ready, we, the invited guests, went to the synagogue to be present at the marriage ceremony. There we waited and waited for some time, but the bridegroom failed to make his appearance. I, therefore, rushed to his apartments, and found him sitting leisurely in an arm-chair, smoking his pipe. He told me that he did not intend to go to the wedding, as Mr Isaacs offered to pay him only the half of the promised dowry in cash, and to give him a note of hand for the balance, which was hardly good enough for acceptance. In the end, he accepted *me* as security for the remaining hundred florins, and followed me to the synagogue, where the marriage ceremony was duly solemnised. As the bridegroom was later on very successful in business, he has never asked me to pay him my debt. Nay, he even sends me sometimes a small present as a token of his remembering the good services which I

have done to him in connection with his engagement and marriage."

Yoikelé listened to the narrative with deep interest, and expressed his admiration for the great cleverness and tact of his host. His decision in his own case was then brief and to the purpose. "Yoikelé is willing," he said, with a grin. Thereupon Mendelé called in his daughter, and presented to her her future husband.

WANDERING JEWISH PREACHERS.

IN Russia and elsewhere there used to be, and still are, certain Jewish preachers, representing a special type of the fraternity, who are commonly known by the name of "Maggidim." They are generally not attached to any particular synagogue, but wander from town to town, preaching in various places of worship, and gain a scanty livelihood from fees they get for their services. Some of them are not without a vein of genuine wit, which gives a touch of brightness to their sermons. Jacob of Dubno, for instance, who lived in the latter part of the eighteenth century, while on his travels was once invited to preach in a synagogue, the members of which were noted

for the radical views they held on religious matters. He had thus a most difficult task before him, but he accomplished it satisfactorily by using the following appropriate parable :—

An inspector of mines, he said, once paid a flying visit to a mine, in order to report to the owners on the condition of the men employed on smelting work. He soon noticed that many of them looked pale and sickly, and asking the reason, he was told that it was due to their having to use their mouths in order to blow up the fire. "Well," said the inspector, "this evil could easily be removed. I will send you an instrument, called the bellows, which keeps the fire alive by its draught, and will relieve you of much superfluous labour."

After a time, the inspector again visited the mine, and was not a little surprised to find no improvement in the looks of the workmen. Having ascertained that the bellows had duly arrived, the inspector went to the furnace, and found that it was not alight, although the fuel was there. Thereupon he told the men that they were the most silly people he ever met with, since they had omitted to kindle the fire at all, which the bellows would otherwise have kept burning.

"Now, my brethren," said the preacher, with a cunning smile, "the meaning of my parable will

no doubt be easily understood by you. A sermon is, in a spiritual sense, somewhat like the bellows. It can only produce an effect on those who listen to it if there is a spark of enthusiasm for their religion left in their innermost heart. Therefore, unless you preserve such a spark among you, no homily whatever will avail to arouse in yourselves any proper and lasting religious feelings."

On another occasion, he also preached before a congregation that happened to consist of the poor and labouring classes. They all appeared to him to be sad and despondent, for the times were bad, and the immediate future looked anything but bright. In order to cheer them up, he used in his religious discourse the following parable :—

A pedlar, he said, was once trudging along the road, carrying on his shoulders a pack of great weight. When almost exhausted, he saw a waggon passing by, the driver of which had pity on him and offered him a lift. The pedlar most gratefully accepted the offer and mounted the vehicle. But, while sitting in it, he continued to hold his load on his back, and when the driver saw this, he was greatly amused, and asked the pedlar why he did not free himself from his heavy burden. In reply to the driver's questio

the pedlar said, by way of explanation, that he did not like to abuse his great kindness by adding to the waggon the heavy weight of his pack.

“His folly, my brethren,” said the preacher, “is somewhat similar to your own. The load of your every-day troubles and cares is quite heavy enough, and why do you make it heavier still by your worrying over the future? Please remember always the hopeful and encouraging words of the Psalmist, ‘Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain thee.’”

HEBREW EPIGRAMS.

LIGHT satire is also frequently met with in the Hebrew epigram, which forms an important part of neo-Hebrew literature. The authors thereof seek their inspiration from all sources. The poet, the judge, the miser, the doctor, the parson, the cantankerous woman—all come within their ken. There are excellent Hebrew epigrams extant, which have been composed by writers living in the middle ages, such as Jehuda Halevi, Ibn Ezra, Alcharizi, Palquera, Immanuel di Roma, and others, but their number is rather small. Much more

numerous, however, are the Hebrew epigrams, whose writers have flourished in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and which, in point of satire, deserve special attention. Several specimens of such epigrams will be quoted here in an English translation, which may be sufficient to give the reader an approximate idea of their form and contents. Though the version is in no sense literal, it generally represents the ideas of the authors quite accurately.

THE FIRST GRAY HAIR.

BY JEHUDA HALEVI (1110-1180).

ONE day I saw a gray hair in my head ;
I plucked it out when thus to me it said :
" Think, if thou wilt, that thou art rid of me,
I've twenty friends who soon will mock at thee."

THE REASON.

BY IBN EZRA (1088-1167).

He. " Why, Miranda, tell me why,
When to me thou'rt talking,
Thou dost watch with pensive sigh
Young Adonis walking ? "

She. "Thou hast taught me, that is why—
Oft I have espied thee
Glance at *me* with furtive eye,
When my aunt's beside me."

THE COLOUR OF MOURNING.

BY JEHUDA ALCHARIZI (1300).

YES, white is the colour of mourning
'Tis Nature's design, of a truth ;
My black hair turned white, when I started
Lamenting the flight of my youth.

THE SONG OF THE PEN.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

MY Muse, though airy, glides softly along,
Singing full oft a voiceless song ;
My pen, though frail and slim of figure,
Has a serpent's tooth and a lion's vigour.

THE MOUTH AND THE EARS.

BY PALQUERA (1269).

MY friend, speak always once, but listen twice,
This I would have you know, is sound advice :
For God hath given you and all your peers
A single mouth, friend, but a pair of ears.

HAPPINESS AMIDST TROUBLES.

BY IMMANUEL DI ROMA (1265-1330).

WHENEVER troublous hours I find
That rob me of my peace of mind,
To thee I haste, my little bride,
And all forget, when by thy side.
Let others load their castled towers,
Their magic grots, their gladsome bowers :
For me that place hath chiefest charms,
That brings me, dearest, to thine arms.

THE MISER.

BY BEN-ZEB (1764-1811).

A MISER once dreamed he had given away
Some bread to a beggar he'd met in the day ;
He woke with a start, and solemnly swore,
That as long as he lived, he would slumber no more.

THE GOURMAND AND LATE RISER.

BY M. SCHLESINGER (1800).

MY piteous plight oft makes me weep—
I cannot eat when I am asleep.

TO A SCRIBBLER.

BY YEITELES (1763-1813).

YOUR book, how tragically you said it
Hath made you patient vigils keep ;
Be comforted, for when I read it,
It lulled me peacefully to sleep.

THE GRAVE-DIGGER'S WILL.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

TO Doctor Pill I am so beholden,
Him dearest of dear friends I call ;
I leave him fifty sovereigns golden,
For 'tis to him I owe them all.

EPITAPH FOR A HEN-PECKED
HUSBAND.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

AT last I can rest ; I am free
From the tongue of my termagant wife,
But I fear very much what will be,
When we're both resurrected to life.

EPITAPH FOR A JUDGE.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

HERE lies Judge A——, he's done with legal tort
And sleeps as soundly as he did in Court.

THE REASON WHY.

BY M. MANDELKERN (1863-1902).

THE Doctors talk Latin, 'tis said,
When they meet in the sick room, Oh why ?
They think that a language that's dead
Suits the man who is going to die.

A HUSBAND'S COMPLAINT.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

By heaven's favour, I possess
Two treasures dearer far than gold ;
A wife and cellar ; I confess
The wine is young, the woman's old.
And nought could now my joy enhance
The crowd of mortal men among,
Unless it happened that, perchance,
The wine were old, the woman young.

AN IMAGINARY CONVERSATION.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

- A.* How passing strange it is of late,
The deaths have numbered almost nil.
B. 'Tis not so startling, when I state,
That Doctor Fell himself is ill.

A DREADFUL GRIEF.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

- A.* My house was burgled yester night.
B. My poor friend, what dreadful grief!
A. The rascal stole my choicest verse.
B. Why, then, I'm sorry for the thief.

An anonymous modern Hebrew writer is the author of the following two epigrams.

I.

THE POET.

IN the lovely month of May,
When the world was bright and gay,
Sat a poet in his room
With a brow of heavy gloom.
Why doth he thus his silence keep?
Have his critics' shafts struck deep?
No : his publisher has told
Not a single book's been sold.

II.

THE BULLY.

(AN EPITAPH).

HERE lieth Yokton, bully ; he
Was loathed by all mankind ;
If safe in Paradise he be,
He'll strike the angels blind,
But if he's found a lower level,
I'm very sorry for the Devil.

THE DISCONSOLATE WIFE.

BY B. SCHWARZFELD.

A COUPLE, John and Jeannie, passed
Their lives in constant disputation,
But, when he died, her tears flowed fast,
And she refused all consolation.
Her friends said, with the death of John,
She found her occupation gone.

THE PRIEST'S WILL.

BY AN ANONYMOUS WRITER.

A WEALTHY priest once made his will,
But naught he left his kith and kin,
Yet to the village simpletons
He gave his wealth to revel in.
"How strange," remarked a trusted friend,
"The way you manage your affairs."
"Why so? through *them* I won my wealth,
So *they* deserve to be my heirs."

BALDNESS.

BY AN ANONYMOUS WRITER.

BE wise, my friend, and do not sigh
That baldness early decks you,
Remember, as the years go by,
Your gray hairs cannot vex you.

A most prolific writer of Hebrew epigrams was Ben-Jacob, who lived at Wilna, Russia, between 1811 and 1863. In 1842 he published a collection of Hebrew epigrams and songs, under the title of: "*Epigrammata ac poemata varia*," the former of which are mostly original and very interesting. Several specimens in a free English translation will follow here.

THE SCRIBBLER.

ZIMRON, poet, makes his will
Orders with his latest breath
That the offspring of his quill
Shall be published after death.
A gloomy prospect 'tis for all, we say.
We hope he'll live for ever and a day.

TO ANOTHER VERSIFIER.

'TIS cruel that critics should love to belabour
Our plagiarist poet with stock and with stone,
For, if he has borrowed the thoughts of his
neighbour,
'Tis harsh to assume that his faults are his own.

THE DEPARTED PHYSICIAN.

OUR doctor is dead ; ah well, dry your tears ;
Death's sad, but what use to resent it ?
For, if he had lived for another few years,
There'd be none of us here to lament it.

YOUTH AND OLD AGE.

I ONCE was young, and now I'm old,
But both my youth and eld displease me ;
For soon the one escaped my hold,
Too soon the other came to seize me,

STRANGE MATRIMONY.

MY friend of twenty summers takes to bride
A maid of four score years of proud endeavour.
Some difference in their age may be descried,
In their stupendous folly none whatever.

THE IGNORAMUS.

ON "Ignoramus" tomb-stone thus they wrote:—

"Here lies what's mortal of a man of note,
Who on the Judgment-Day again shall rise
With all the other good and great and wise."

The joy of reading this thou'll ne'er recall,
For in thy life thou couldst not read at all.

THE MISER.

I'm growing old, and hence ere long shall fare ;
How I should love to be my only heir.

THE PENITENT.

A RICH, but not a holy man,
Grew old, and to repent began ;
So, to perform a pious deed
That would procure him heaven's meed,
He thought, and thought, and bade at last
His *servants* one whole day to fast.

THE GOLDEN LOCKS.

MIRANDA, so her friends make moan,
Her golden locks with dye does foster ;
Believe it not ; they are her own,
And many a golden sovereign cost her.

DR PILL.

ONCE, when I was very ill,
I called in famous Doctor Pill ;
He cured me, true ; I saw his bill—
And find myself a sick man still.

THE TOPER TO THE MOON.

WHY so disdainful ? I've far better cause
To be proud of myself, it is clear ;
Thou showest thy full face but once in a month,
While mine is ablaze all the year.

THE WINE CUP.

I AM fond of the wine cup, for when I am well,
It makes all my happiness double,
And whenever sadness casts o'er me its spell,
It helps to get rid of the trouble.

THE INDIGENT POET.

OUR starveling poet cries aloud ;
 " The world's the place of God,
 " Put off your shoes "—and so he's proud
 To roam the world unshod.

ON A MINOR POET.

HIS verse is of excellent credit,
 The rhymes and metre enthrall,
 But you will see that, when once you have read it,
 It wasn't worth reading at all.

FRIENDSHIP.

Do not regard as friends of thine
 Men who but love thee for thy wine,
 And who will utterly ignore
 The man who cannot treat them more.

BOASTING.

To boast of your knowledge and learning
 Amongst the foolish, accounts you a boor ;
 'Tis just like the prosperous upstart
 Who brags of his wealth to the poor.

WISE PEOPLE.

THINK not that those are purely sages
Whose beard and paunch are large of size,
Or else the goats through all the ages
Must, too, be classed among the wise.

EPITAPH.

WEEP ye not for Mary Anne,
She sleepeth now at rest,
Free from labour's heavy ban,
From mistress's behest.
E'en from reading prayers she's freed :
The poor girl never learned to read.

THE DEVOTED LOVER.

WHO kneels before his lady fair,
And begs her love in humble mode,
Is like the camel on his knees,
Eager to bear his master's load.

FABLES.

LIKE the Hebrew epigram, so also the Hebrew fable belongs to that branch of Hebrew literature in which light satire is manifested more or less conspicuously. The origin of the fable still forms a matter of discussion among writers on the subject, but there is no doubt that traces of its existence are to be found in ancient Hebrew writings, such as the Bible, and in portions of the old Rabbinical literature. In the former, animals and plants are invested with sentiments, thoughts, and actions of human beings, and in two places—Judges xi. 8-15, and 2 Kings xiv. 9—two genuine fables occur in which trees are mentioned as being occupied with the choice of a king. A vein of light satire is certainly discernible in these interesting fables which have, in subsequent centuries, served several Hebrew authors as models for imitation. Thus, there is extant a pretty large number of fables which had been adapted for moral or political purposes. The same practice was followed by some representatives of ancient Greek literature, as instanced by Aristophanes in "The Frogs."

The following few specimens will give the reader some notion of the character of Hebrew fables of various ages.

THE SPIDER AND THE BEE.

A RABBINICAL FABLE.

A SPIDER and a bee were once discussing which of the two produced more useful things. "You," said the spider, "certainly produce honey, but you get it only from outside by culling it from various flowers in the fields and gardens. But the threads which I produce, I spin from my own body, and thus the sources which I use are within me." "True," said the bee, "but your threads are not only useless, but also so disagreeable that they are often destroyed. The sweet stuff, however, which I supply are greatly appreciated, and I am, in consequence, frequently praised in verse and prose."

Moral.

Introduce to thy neighbours only that which is pleasant and useful, though it may not be of thy own creation.

THE LION AND THE FOX.

A RABBINICAL FABLE.

ONE day, the king of the beasts went on a voyage, and was attended, among other animals, by the fox. On their arrival in port, an ass, who held the office of tax collector, demanded the usual toll. Being reproved by the fox for asking toll of a king, the ass said that he returned it to his treasurer.

With this foolish excuse the lion was greatly displeased, and in order to punish the ass, he told the fox to tear him to pieces, and to bring the remains for his consumption. The fox did so, but reserved the heart, and ate it himself. When the lion found it missing, he asked the fox the reason for its disappearance. "Oh," said the fox in reply, "the ass never had a heart, for if he had possessed one, he would never have been such a fool as to demand toll from a king."

THE ANGLER AND THE LITTLE FISH.

(COMPOSED BY A HEBREW WRITER LIVING
IN 1200 A.D.)

ONCE an angler was sitting near a brook fishing. On drawing his net out of the water, he found

there a struggling little fish. Presently, it began to speak, imploring the angler to set it free that it might enjoy itself in the water until it had grown bigger. Then, it added, it would voluntarily surrender. But the angler said that he would rather have it now for sure than trust to a doubtful chance of getting it in future.

THE COCK AND THE ELDERS OF A SYNAGOGUE.

(BY JUDAH ALCHARIZI, ABOUT 1200 A.D.)

ONCE upon a time, the Elders of a synagogue went to an inn to dine together. Having ordered poultry, the innkeeper told them that he had only one large, old cock in the yard which was a most ferocious-looking bird, and would possibly give much trouble to catch and kill. But the Elders insisted on having the cock for their meal, and volunteered to assist the innkeeper to catch him, as they liked to have a little sport. When they entered the yard, the cock became suspicious, and, with a loud shriek, he ran out, biting the fingers of those who endeavoured to get hold of him. Ultimately, after a fruitless chase, the cock flew up to the roof of the little synagogue, where, after

having crowed three times in succession, he addressed the Elders, as follows :—

“Listen to me attentively, ye Elders of this Synagogue, who pretend to be pious and God-fearing people. Is it right that you should maliciously plan to seize and kill me after I have rendered you, for several years past, many kind and valuable services? Did not my regular crowing day by day in the early morning wake you from your slumbers, and remind you to go to synagogue, and offer there your prayers to the Almighty? Besides, you ought to remember that I *have* been, and am still the progenitor of a large and ever multiplying flock of chickens which afford to both the sick and healthy members of your community delicious and invigorating food. Moreover, pray do not forget that I am now old, and that, in consequence, my meat cannot but be tough and tasteless, so that, should I become a victim of your greediness, you would suffer from indigestion, and you would have to call in the physician whose bill would no doubt be very heavy. And, finally, I beseech you to mind the words of the Scripture which commands you in reference to young birds, to spare the parents thereof, while you remove their offspring from their nests” (Comp. Deut. xxii. 7).

When the Elders heard the cock’s words, they

were moved to pity and remorse. They paid the innkeeper the value of the old cock, and instructed him to let him live on unharmed till he died.

THE GARDENER AND THE BIRD.

(BY KALONYMOS BEN KALONYMOS, 1287 A.D.)

ONE day a large bird got into an orchard, and destroyed a quantity of fruit. Suddenly the gardener appeared on the scene, and, seeing the destruction wrought by the bird, he caught it, and decided to wring its neck. But the bird implored him to spare its life, saying that if he did so, it would tell him three ancient and useful maxims, and would likewise fetch him a hidden jewel that was as big as its own body.

The gardener having consented, the bird said :—

“Firstly, you must never crave after the unobtainable. Secondly, you must not deplore past losses. And thirdly, you must not believe fairy tales.”

Thereupon the gardener allowed the bird to escape, reminding it of the hidden jewel. But the bird settled itself on a tree outside the orchard, and mocked at him, who, seeing himself duped, called it back. But the bird told him to

recall the three golden rules it had shortly before quoted to him, and said that he was a fool not to follow them.

THE MAN, THE DOG, AND THE ASS.

(BY A HEBREW WRITER LIVING IN THE MIDDLE AGES.)

ONCE a man had in his house a beautiful little dog and an ugly ass. He allowed the dog to sit on his knee, to kiss him, and to share his meals. Now, the ass became envious at this great intimacy, and decided to follow suit. Thus, one day, he went into the house, and tried to embrace his owner with his forelegs, and to kiss his face. But the owner, in a great rage, beat him off with a heavy cane, and ordered his servants to do the same, which they readily did. So the poor ass, bruised and sore, was confined to his stall, where he soon ended his painful existence.

Moral.

Do not envy other people's good luck.

THE RAVEN AND THE COLOURED
BIRDS.

(BY AN AUTHOR LIVING IN THE MIDDLE AGES.)

A RAVEN once saw a flock of birds flying about whose beautiful plumage shone brightly in the sun. He therefore envied them, and regarded his own black feathers with disfavour. Presently, he picked up some coloured feathers that had fallen from the flying birds, and attached them to his own wings. He then sat down on the branch of a tree on which a great many coloured birds had settled, and pretended to be one of them. But they soon found out the trick, and decided to punish him severely for his impertinence. They therefore surrounded him, and plucked out all his feathers. Thus, the poor bird remained featherless, and his bare body was exposed to the wind and the rain. After a little while he sickened, and died of a premature death.

Moral.

Be satisfied with what you possess.

THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE COCK.

(COMPOSED BY A MODERN WRITER—DR
MANDELKERN.)

ONCE, on a fine bright morning, a nightingale and his mate were sitting together on a branch of a tree that stood near a farmyard. There the cock was proudly strutting about amidst a crowd of feathered animals, including the members of his seraglio. Presently, the nightingale began to sing some of his wonted songs, and with such sweetness that he was listened to with rapture by all present, except the cock. For he, in his jealousy, crowed and crowed again, and after each pause flapped his wings. This he did with such vehemence that the animals in the farmyard became frightened, and fled in utter consternation.

Amazed at the cock's antics, the nightingale's mate asked her spouse the reason. "The cock," he said, "flaps his wings in order to applaud those efforts which were not appreciated by others."

THE PROUD ASS.

(COMPOSED BY THE SAME AUTHOR.)

ONCE a lion was walking in the field with an ass which was warmly greeted by another ass that was grazing near by. But the lion's companion resented this familiarity, and called it a great and shameful piece of impudence. Thereupon the other grinned and said: "Why are you so proud, you contemptible creature? You will surely continue to be an ass to the end of your days, in spite of your being now in the lion's distinguished company."

It has now and again been stated by certain eminent non-Jewish writers that the Jews have never possessed any sense of humour or satire, and that consequently Hebrew literature, both ancient and modern, was completely devoid of either of them. Now, it is quite true that they have shed more tears than any other people in past ages ever did, but it is equally true that they have always been ready to smile through them. This is proved to some extent by the existence of a good many humorous and satirical Hebrew writings that have been composed by

Jewish authors, living at various times and in different countries, several extracts from which are given in the present volume.

It ought, perhaps, also to be mentioned here that Hebrew is not the only language in which Jews have excelled in writing delightful and mirth-provoking satires. German literature, for instance, is known to contain a considerable number of them.

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